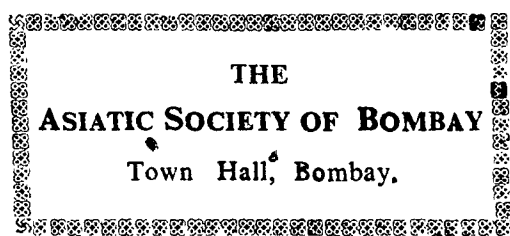




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JAPANESE POETRY

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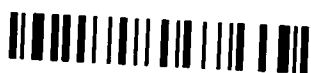
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PREFACE.

The translations forming Parts I, II, and III of this volume were first published thirty years ago, and have long been out of print. That hackneyed plea, "the urgent request of friends," must be the apology for reissuing a piece of work which was the writer's maiden effort, and which no longer satisfies him, because he allowed himself too much freedom. True, since that early day, Japanese translators have returned the compliment by rendering European poetry more freely still; nor is it easy to act otherwise when confronted with the well-nigh impossible task of interpreting between tongues so widely sundered in time, space, and the whole texture of expression. It is hard enough to reproduce modern French verse adequately in English, let alone ancient Japanese.

Be this as it may, the writer's taste has changed. He has gone over to the camp of the literalists, and cares for no versions, whether of prose or of poetry, unless they be scrupulously exact. For this reason, and in order to present to English readers material for the appreciation of the Japanese muse at a later stage, when she had donned a simpler garb, he has profited by the kind permission of

the Council of the Asiatic Society of Japan to republish in this same volume an essay on *Bashō and the Japanese Epigram*, first printed in Vol. XXX of the "Transactions" of that Society, which carries on the story of Japanese poetry to a later date, and with whose scholarship he is better satisfied. Some trifling verbal alterations have been made in it, so as to fit it on to the preceding portions of the volume.

The author's special thanks are due to his friends, Mr. W. B. Mason and Mr. James Stewart, for revising the proof-sheets.

Miyanoshita,

November, 1910.

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INTRODUCTION.

The soil from which sprang the classical poetry of Japan was essentially aristocratic. We know little of the real state of the country before the fifth century of the Christian era; for the earlier portions of the so-called Japanese "histories"—the "*Kojiki*" and "*Nihongi*"—are but a mass of old wives' tales. The student is compelled to glean stray items from the references scattered up and down the more trustworthy Chinese and Korean annals. In the fifth century, however, the curtain lifts. The art of writing was then introduced, and a knowledge of letters everywhere forms the bridge leading out of barbarism into civilisation, out of mythopoeic fancy into the realm of sober fact. Great indeed was the revolution wrought in Japanese society, Japanese thought, Japanese manners, between 450 and 700 A.D. Not writing only, but every art known to the Chinese world was then brought across the narrow Korean strait,—brought by the artificers themselves, who, settling in the country, must have formed an appreciable element of the population. Even about one-third of the Japanese aristocracy itself was of Korean origin, according to an ancient "Peerage" called "*Shōji-roku*." Buddhism was preached in the sixth century, introducing the Japanese to the idea of a unified code of doctrine whose object was moral perfection. Above all, in the seventh century, the entire system of government was revolutionised and reorganised on the Chinese model. It became a centralised bureaucracy, at whose apex, remote and sacred, a veritable god on earth, stood, or rather sat, the "Son of Heaven," the Mikado, lineally descended from the Great Goddess of the Sun. Grouped around him, somewhat in contradiction to the Chinese system, but in accord with the earlier national traditions, were the nobles,

most of whom also claimed divine descent. They dwelt with their Sovereign Lord in the capital, which they rarely quitted, except when sent abroad as envoys, or else as governors to distant, newly conquered provinces. For the older Japan had covered a comparatively narrow area; the site of the present capital, Tōkyō, and all the region to the north of it, were still barbarous wastes. As for the common people, they had scarcely as yet been touched by the new culture.

Thus it came about that practically the whole early literature was written by and for a small circle of lords and ladies, princes and princesses. To this day, a different cast of features distinguishes the high-born Japanese from the common folk, whose "pudding-faces" announce their intellectual inferiority. At that early period, when but little mixture of blood could yet have taken place, the lower classes doubtless retained in a still more marked degree the impress of their aboriginal descent. All talent was, therefore, as naturally aristocratic as was all education,—so much so, that we find attached to one of the pieces here translated what reads like a note of surprise at the possibility of poetic genius manifesting itself in any man of plebeian origin. Some of the characteristics of classical Japanese poetry have their explanation in the fact that it is thus a Court poetry. Nowhere in it do we come across a low word or a vulgar thought. Even the mention of low and vulgar people seems well-nigh excluded. It is always upward, never downward, that the poet looks, so that if, for instance, a drought is the subject of his verse, he makes lamentation, not for the sufferings of the peasantry, but for the loss to the Imperial Exchequer! Thus, too, may we account for the general avoidance of shocking and over-vivid themes, including the theme of war. For though conspiracies and faction-fights formed the groundwork of the politics of that age, to allude to them in verse would not have been seemly. In the Chinese theory of the state,

warriors occupy no honourable place :—the whole entourage of the early Japanese Court was, in theory at least, civilian.

* * * *

Incidental mention was made above of the two most ancient Japanese books,—the “*Kojiki*,” or “Record of Ancient Matters,” published in A.D. 712, and the “*Nihongi*,” or “Chronicles of Japan,” published in A.D. 720. Quite a number of extremely early poems, are quoted in both these works ; but they do not lend themselves well to our present purpose.* The compositions translated in Part I of this volume are taken from the “*Man-yōshū*,” or “Collection of a Myriad Leaves,” which was the first Japanese anthology proper. Its date is not known with certainty, but is referred by the best native critics to the reign of the Emperor Shōmu (died A.D. 756). The compiler was a favourite of that monarch, Prince Moroe (died A.D. 757), to whom some would add as coadjutor the court noble Yakamochi (died A.D. 785), a number of whose poems are contained in the latter volumes of the collection. It has, however, been suggested that only the volumes now bearing the numbers I., II., XI., XII., XIII., and XIV should be regarded as forming the original compilation, the remaining fourteen having been added a few years later from various private sources. Those to whom Japanese is familiar, will find the whole matter treated *in extenso* in Mabuchi’s edition of the “Myriad Leaves ;” but to the general reader, and indeed to the main question of authenticity and antiquity, it matters little what decision be arrived at on this and other minor points. There are no grounds for placing the composition of any of the poems later than A.D. 760, while from the beginning of the tenth century onwards, that is, from less than a hundred and fifty years after that date, we

* Students curious of seeing literal translations will find one *in extenso* of the “*Kojiki*” by the present writer, and of the “*Nihongi*” by Mr. W. G. Aston,

have constant and unimpeachable reference to the collection as a body, and to its appearance during the period when Nara was the capital of the country, viz. (including temporary migrations of the Court to other towns in the neighbourhood), from A.D. 710 to 784.

* * * *

We cannot here enter into details regarding Japanese prosody, which will find their appropriate place in Part IV of this volume. Suffice it to say that, from the earliest age, alternate lines of five and seven syllables, with an extra line of seven syllables at the end, had been the national form of verse and have remained so down to the present day. But a fondness for excessive brevity in verse became more and more deeply rooted in the national taste. Accordingly, from the end of the eighth century onward, the comparatively long poems* exemplified in our Part I ceased to be produced. Thenceforth the only current form was a stanza of five lines, having respectively 5,7,5,7, and 7 syllables, or 31 in all.† During the mediæval period, from the tenth century to the fifteenth, no less than twenty-one anthologies were issued by Imperial command, the poems contained in which were of that form exclusively. The first of these anthologies, the "*Kokinshū*," or "Collection of Odes Ancient and Modern," appeared in the year 905. The high-born poet Tsurayuki and three other noblemen were the compilers. Our Part II gives a small selection made from among its many thousands of miniature poems. They are arranged in the original according to their subjects, under the headings of Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, Congratulations, Parting, Travelling, Acrostics, Love, Elegies, Various, Conceits, and one or two minor ones, several of these headings being themselves subdivided for the sake of convenience of reference. Thus, Love is broken up into five parts, commencing with Love

* In Japanese, *naga-uta*.

† This "short stanza" is called *tanka* in Japanese.

Unconfessed, and ending with Love Unrequited and Forgotten. Such a conceit is highly characteristic of the downward tendency of the Japanese mind since the simpler and healthier early days, and of the substitution of hair-splitting puerilities for the true spirit of poetry. So far as they go, however, the "Odes Ancient and Modern" are not without manifold charms, and are decidedly superior to the twenty Imperial collections that succeeded them.

Though fading, the poetical spirit of the country did not, however, yet wither completely away. Indeed, some may think that, like the forests of the land that gave it birth, it was fairer in its autumn tints than in its summer or in its spring. Towards the end of the fourteenth century, in the hands of the Buddhist priesthood, who during that troublous epoch had become almost the sole repositories of taste and learning, arose the lyric drama, at first but an adaptation of the old religious dances, the choric songs accompanying which were expanded and improved. The next step was the introduction of individual personages, which led to the adoption of a dramatic unity in the plot, though the supreme importance still assigned to the chorus left to the performance its mainly lyric character, till, at a somewhat later period, the theatrical tendency became supreme, and the romantic melodrama of the modern Japanese stage was evolved. The last of the three plays translated in this work is a specimen of Japanese classical poetry just before this final step was taken, when the new spirit was already struggling within the old forms. The analogy of the course of development here sketched out with that of the Greek drama is too obvious to need any remark. Great doubt hangs over the precise date and authorship of most of the dramatic pieces, on account of the Japanese custom of attributing to the head of the house of lyric actors at any given time, all the plays brought out under his auspices. But before the end of the sixteenth century their production had ceased.

The manner of representing the lyric dramas is peculiar. The stage, which has remained unaltered in every respect since the beginning of the fifteenth century, when the early dramatists Seami and Otoami acted at Kyōto before the then Shōgun, Yoshimasa, is a square wooden room open on all sides but one, and supported on pillars, the side of the square being about eighteen English feet. It is surmounted by a quaint roof somewhat resembling those to be seen on the Japanese Buddhist temples, and is connected with the green-room by a gallery some nine feet wide. Upon this gallery part of the action occasionally takes place. Added on to the back of the square stage is a narrow space where sits the orchestra, consisting of one flute-player, two performers on instruments which, in the absence of a more fitting name, may perhaps be called tambourines, and one beater of the drum, while the chorus, whose number is not fixed, squat on the ground to the right of the spectator. In a line with the chorus, between it and the audience, sits the less important of the two actors* during the greater portion of the piece. The back of the stage, the only side not open to the air, is painted with a pine-tree in accordance with ancient usage, while, equally in conformity to established rules, three small pine-trees are planted in the court which divides the gallery from the space occupied by the less distinguished portion of the audience. The covered place for the audience, who all squat on the mats according to the immemorial custom of their countrymen, runs round three sides of the stage, the most honourable seats being those which directly face it. Masks are worn by such of the actors as take the parts of females or of supernatural beings, and the dresses are gorgeous in the extreme.

* Two was the number of the actors during the golden days of the art. "*Nakamitsu*," which is a late piece, written when the poetical drama of the Middle Ages was already passing over into the prose play of modern times, contains several characters. In this piece, it is the Abbot who would sit in the place indicated in the text.

Scenery, however, is allowed no place on the lyric stage, though carried to perfection at the theatres where are acted the more modern plays. A true sense of the fitness of things seems, on this point, to have kept the actors faithful to the old traditions of their art. For on the few occasions, occurring mostly in the later pieces, where this rule is broken through and an attempt made at scenic effect, the spectator cannot help feeling that the spell is in a manner broken, so completely ideal a performance being marred by the adoption of any of the adventitious aids of the melodramatic stage.* The same remark applies to the statuesque immobility of the actors, and to the peculiar intonation of the recitative. When once the ear has become used to its loudness, it is by no means unpleasing, while the measured cadences of the chorus are from the very first both soothing and impressive. The music, unfortunately, cannot claim like praise, and the dancing executed by the chief character towards the close of each piece is tedious and meaningless to the European spectator. The performance occupies a whole day. For although each piece takes, on an average, but one hour to represent, five or six are given in succession, and the intervals between them filled up by the acting of comic scenes.

Down to the time of the late revolution, much ceremony and punctilious etiquette hedged in on every side those who were admitted to the honour of viewing these dramatic performances at the Shōgun's Court. Now the doors are open to all alike, but it is still chiefly the old aristocracy who make up the audience; and even they, highly trained as they are in the ancient literature, usually bring with them a book of the play, to enable them to follow with the eye the difficult text, which is rendered still harder of comprehension by the varying tones of the choric chant.

* * * *

* For a different view of this absence of scenery, see Mitford's "Tales of Old Japan," vol. i. p. 164.

While the development of the lyric drama had been widening the scope of the Japanese poet's activity, a contrary influence was at work to narrow it again to Lilliputian proportions. The thirty-one syllable ode underwent a process of disintegration which ended in flooding Japan with poems each of which was only seventeen syllables long! The process was so complicated, the result so curious and important, that the whole of Part IV of the present volume is devoted to its study.

Thus are we brought down almost to the present day. It will be seen from the tenour of the preceding remarks that, however sketchy in character, the present volume does yet, in a way, aim at giving the general reader a bird's-eye view of standard Japanese poetry as a whole,—first the Archaic and Early Classic age of the “*Man-yōshū*,” next the Classic age proper represented by the “Short Poems” of the “*Kokinshū*,” which, even in this present twentieth century, at a distance of a thousand years from their composition, still serve as models to modern poets. After these, the mediæval Lyric Dramas; finally, the tiny modern verses, to which we have ventured to apply the name of Epigrams. Should any reader desire to become a serious student of the subject (so far as that is possible without learning the difficult Japanese language), he is advised to peruse first Mr. W. G. Aston's *History of Japanese Literature*, and, if that is not found sufficient, Mr. F. V. Dickins's literal translations of the “Long Poems” of the “*Man-yōshū*” contained in his *Primitive and Mediæval Japanese Texts*. Dr. Karl Florenz's “*Geschichte der japanischen Litteratur*” may be specially recommended to all those familiar with the German language.

PART I.

POËMS

FROM THE

“MAN-YŌSHŪ”

OR,

“*COLLECTION OF A MYRIAD LEAVES.*”

BALLADS.

The Fisher Boy Urashima.

'Tis Spring, and the mists come stealing
O'er Suminóye's shore,
And I stand by the seaside musing
On the days that are no more.

I muse on the old-world story,
As the boats glide to and fro,
Of the fisher-boy Urashima,
Who a-fishing lov'd to go ;

How he came not back to the village
Though sev'n suns had risen and set,
But row'd on past the bounds of ocean,
And the sea-god's daughter met ;

How they pledged their faith to each other,
And came to the Evergreen Land,
And enter'd the sea-god's palace
So lovingly hand in hand,

To dwell for aye in that country,
The ocean-maiden and he,—
The country where youth and beauty
Abide eternally.

But the foolish boy said, "To-morrow
I'll come back with thee to dwell;
But I have a word to my father,
A word to my mother to tell."

The maiden answered, "A casket
I give into thine hand;
And if that thou hopest truly
To come back to the Evergreen Land,

"Then open it not, I charge thee!
Open it not, I beseech!"
So the boy row'd home o'er the billows
To Suminôye's beach.

But where is his native hamlet?
Strange hamlets line the strand.
Where is his mother's cottage?
Strange cots rise on either hand.

"What, in three short years since I left it,"
He cries in his wonder sore,
"Has the home of my childhood vanished?
Is the bamboo fence no more?"

“Perchance if I open the casket
Which the maiden gave to me,
My home and the dear old village
Will come back as they used to be.”

And he lifts the lid, and there rises
A fleecy, silvery cloud,
That floats off to the Evergreen Country :—
And the fisher-boy cries aloud ;

He waves the sleeve of his tunic,
He rolls over on the ground,
He dances with fury and horror,
Running wildly round and round.*

But a sudden chill comes o’er him
That bleaches his raven hair,
And furrows with hoary wrinkles
The form erst so young and fair.

His breath grows fainter and fainter,
Till at last he sinks dead on the shore ;
And I gaze on the spot where his cottage
Once stood, but now stands no more.

(ANON.)

* Such frantic demonstrations of grief are very frequently mentioned in the early poetry, and sound strangely in the ears of those who are accustomed to the more than English reserve of the modern Japanese. Possibly, as in Europe, so in Japan, there may have been a real change of character in this respect.

The legend of Urashima is one of the oldest in the language, and traces of it may even be found in the official annals, where it is stated that "in the twenty-first year of the Emperor Yūryaku, the boy Urashima of Midzunoe, in the district of Yosa, in the province of Tango, a descendant of the divinity Shimanemi, went to Elysium in a fishing-boat." And again, that "in the second year of Tenchō, under the Emperor Go-Junwa. . . the boy Urashima returned, and then disappeared, none knew whither." The dates mentioned correspond to A.D. 477 and 825. Urashima's tomb, together with his fishing-line, the casket given him by the maiden, and two stones said to be precious, are still shown at one of the temples in Kanagawa near Yokohama; and by most of even the educated Japanese, the story, thus historically and topographically certified, is accepted as literally true. In the popular version, the "Evergreen Land" visited by Urashima is changed into the Dragon Palace, to which later Japanese myth, coloured by Chinese tradition, has assigned the residence of the sea-god. The word Dragon Palace is in Japanese *ryūgū*, or, more properly, *ryūkyū* which is likewise the Japanese pronunciation of the name of the islands we call Luchu, and the Chinese Liu-kiu; and it has been suggested that the Dragon Palace may be but a fanciful name given by some shipwrecked voyager to those sunny southern isles, whose inhabitants still distinguish themselves, even above their Chinese and Japanese neighbours, by their fondness for the dragon as an artistic and architectural adornment. There is one ode in the "*Man-yōshū*" which would favour this idea, speaking, as it does, of the orange having been first brought to Japan from the "Evergreen Land" lying to the south.

Ballad.

COMPOSED ON SEEING A DEAD BODY BY THE ROADSIDE
WHEN CROSSING THE ASHIGARA PASS.*

Methinks from the hedge round the garden
His bride the fair hemp had ta'en,
And woven the fleecy raiment
That ne'er he threw off him again.

For toilsome the journey he journeyed
To serve his liege and his lord,†
Till the single belt that encircled him
Was changed to a thrice-wound cord ;

And now, methinks, he was faring
Back home to the country-side,
With thoughts all full of his father,
Of his mother, and of his bride.

But here 'mid the eastern mountains,
Where the awful pass climbs their brow,
He halts in his onward journey
And builds him a dwelling low ;

And here he lies stark in his garments,
Dishevelled his raven hair,
And ne'er can he tell me his birthplace,
Nor the name that he erst did bear.

(SAKIMARO.)

* One of the passes by which the traveller from Kyōto may cross the Hakone range to reach the plain of Tōkyō.

† i.e., the Mikado. The feudal system did not grow up till many centuries later.

The Maiden of Unai.*

In Ashinôya village dwelt
The Maiden of Unai,
On whose beauty the next-door neighbours e'en
Might cast no wondering eye ;

For they locked her up as a child of eight,
When her hair hung loosely still ;
And now her tresses were gathered up,
To float no more at will.†

And the men all yearn'd that her sweet face
Might once more stand reveal'd,
Who was hid from gaze, as in silken maze
The chrysalis lies concealed.

And they formed a hedge around the house,
And, " I'll wed her ! " they all did cry ;
And the Champion of Chinu he was there,
And the Champion of Unai.

With jealous love these champions twain
The beauteous girl did woo ;

* The letters *nai* are sounded like our English word *nigh*.

† Anciently (and this custom is still followed in some parts of Japan) the hair of female children was cut short at the neck and allowed to hang down loosely till the age of eight. At twelve or thirteen the hair was generally bound up, though this ceremony was also frequently postponed until marriage. At the present day, the methods of doing the hair of female children, of grown-up girls, and of married women vary considerably.

Each had his hand on the hilt of his sword,
And a full-charged quiver, too,

Was slung o'er the back of each champion fierce,
And a bow of snow-white wood
Did rest in the sinewy hand of each ;
And the twain defiant stood,

Crying, " An 'twere for her dear sake,
Nor fire nor flood I'd fear ! "
The maiden heard each daring word,
But spake in her mother's ear :

" Alas ! that I, poor country girl,
Should cause this jealous strife !
An I may not wed the man I love,*
What profits me my life ?

" In Hades' realm† I will await
The issue of the fray."
These secret thoughts, with many a sigh,
She whisper'd, and pass'd away.

To the champion of Chinu in a dream
Her face that night was shown ;
So he followed the maid to Hades' shade,
And his rival was left alone ;

* Viz., as we gather from another poem by the same author, the Champion of Chinu.

† The Japanese name for Hades is *Yomi*, allied to the word *yoru*, "night." Few particulars are to be gleaned from the old books. Motoori, the great modern apostle of Shintō, writes of it as follows:—"Hades is a land beneath the earth, whither, when they die, go all men, mean and noble, virtuous and wicked, without distinction."

Left alone,—too late ! too late !
He gapes at the vacant air,
He shouts, and he yells, and gnashes his teeth,
And dances in wild despair.

“ But no ! I’ll not yield ! ” he fiercely cries,
“ I’m as good a man as he ! ”
And, girding his poniard, he follows after,
To search out his enemy.

The kinsmen then, on either side,
In solemn conclave met,
As a token for ever and evermore
Some monument for to set,

That the story might pass from mouth to mouth
While heav’n and earth shall stand :
So they laid the maiden in the midst,
And the champions on either hand.

And I, when I hear the mournful tale,
I melt into bitter tears,
As though these lovers I never saw
Had been mine own compeers.

(MUSHIMARO.)

The Grave of the Maiden of Unai.

I stand by the grave where they buried
The Maiden of Unai,
Whom of old the rival champions
Did woo so jealously.

The grave should hand down through the ages
Her story for evermore,
That men yet unborn might love her,
And think on the days of yore.

And so beside the causeway
They piled up the boulders high ;
Nor e'er, till the clouds that o'ershadow us
Shall vanish from the sky,

May the pilgrim along the causeway
Forget to turn aside,
And mourn o'er the grave of the Maiden ;
And the village folk, beside,

Ne'er cease from their bitter weeping,
But cluster around her tomb ;
And the ages repeat her story,
And bewail the Maiden's doom.

Till at last e'en I stand gazing
On the grave where she now lies low,
And muse with unspeakable sadness
On the old days long ago.

(SAKIMARO.)

The existence of the Maiden of Unai is not doubted by any of the native authorities, and, as usual, the tomb is there (or said to be there, for the present writer's search after it on the occasion of a somewhat hurried visit to that part of the country was vain) to attest the truth of the tradition. Ashinoya is the name of the village, and Unai that of the district. The locality is in the province of Settsu, between the present treaty-ports of Kōbe and Ōsaka. During the Middle Ages the story went on growing, and it may perhaps not be without interest to see the shape it had assumed by the tenth century. A classical story-book dating from that time, and entitled "*Yamato Monogatari*," or "*Tales of Japan*," tells the tale as follows:—

In days of old there dwelt a maiden in the land of Settsu, whose hand was sought in marriage by two lovers. One, Mubara by name, was a native of the same country-side: the other, called Chinu, was a native of the land of Izumi. The two were alike in years, alike in face, in figure and in stature; and whereas the maiden thought to accept the wooing of him that should the more dearly love her, lo! it fell out that they both loved her with the same love. No sooner faded the light of day than both came to do their courting, and when they sent her gifts, the gifts were quite alike. Of neither could it be said that he excelled the other, and the girl meanwhile felt sick at heart. Had they been men of lukewarm devotion, neither would ever have obtained the maiden's hand; but it was because both of them, day after day and month after month, stood before the cottage gate and made evident their affection in ten thousand different ways, that the maiden pined with a divided love. Neither lover's gifts were accepted, and yet both would come and stand, bearing in their hands gifts. The maiden had a father and a mother, and they said to her, "Sad is it for us to have to bear the burden of thine unseemly conduct, in thus carelessly from month to month, and from year to year, causing others to sorrow. If thou wilt accept the one, after a little time the other's love will cease." The maiden made answer, "That likewise was my thought. But the sameness of the love of both has made me altogether sick at heart. Alas! what shall I do?"

Now in olden days the people dwell in houses raised on platforms built out into the river Ikuta. So the girl's father and mother, summoning to their presence the two lovers, spake

thus : " Our child is pining with a love divided by the equal ardour of your worships. But to-day we intend, by whatever means, to fix her choice. One of you showeth his devotion by coming hither from a distant home ; the other is our neighbour, but his love is boundless. This one and that are alike worthy of our pitying regard." Both the lovers heard these words with respectful joy ; and the father and mother continued : " What we have further in our minds to say is this : floating on our river is a water-bird. Draw your bows at it ; and to him that shall strike it, will we have the honour to present our daughter." " Well thought ! " replied the lovers twain ; and drawing their bows at the same instant, one struck the bird in the head and the other in the tail, so that neither could claim to be the better marksman. Sick with love, the maiden cried out—

" Enough, enough ! yon swiftly flowing wave
Shall free my soul from her long anxious strife :
Men call fair Settsu's stream the stream of life,
But in that stream shall be the maiden's grave ! "

and, with these words, let herself fall down into the river from the platform that overlooked it.

While the father and mother, frantic with grief, were raving and shouting, the two lovers plunged together into the stream. One caught hold of the maiden's foot and the other of her hand, and the three sank together and perished in the flood. Terrible was the grief of the girl's father and mother, as, amid tears and lamentations, they lifted her body out of the water and prepared to give it burial. The parents of the two lovers likewise came to the spot, and dug, for their sons, graves beside the grave of the maiden. But the father and mother of him that dwelt in the same country-side raised an outcry, saying, " That he who belongs to the same land should be buried in the same place is just. But how shall it be lawful for an alien to desecrate our soil ! " So the parents of him that dwelt in Izumi loaded a junk with Izumi earth, in which, having brought it to the spot, they laid their son : and to this day the maiden's grave stands there in the middle, and the graves of her lovers on either side. Paintings, too, of all these scenes of bygone days have been presented to the former Empress,* and, moved by the pictures, many persons have

* Probably the consort of the Mikado Uda, who died A.D. 931.

composed stanzas of poetry, putting themselves in the place of one or other of the three persons of the story. . . . (Here follow a number of thirty-one-syllable poems that are not worth the trouble of translating ; and the tale then proceeds thus :) Ceremonial garments, trousers, a hat, and a sash were placed in a large hollow bamboo-cane, and buried with the one (i.e., the native of Unai), together with a bow, a quiver and a long sword. But the father and mother of the other must have been silly folks, for they prepared nothing in like manner. The "Maiden's Grave" is the name by which the grave is called.

A certain wayfarer, who once passed the night in the neighbourhood of the grave, startled by the sound of fighting, sent his retainers to inquire into the cause thereof. They returned saying that they could hear nothing. But the wayfarer kept pondering on the strange story, and at last fell asleep. Then there rose up before him a blood-stained man, who, kneeling at his side, spake thus : " I am sorely harassed by the persecutions of an enemy, and entreat thee to condescend to lend me thy sword that I may be revenged on my tormentor." The request filled the wayfarer with alarm ; nevertheless, he lent his sword, and, shortly awaking, imagined it to have been but a dream ; yet in very truth the sword was missing ; and, as he listened attentively, his ear caught the same terrific sound of fighting that had struck it at first. But a brief time elapsed before the spectre reappeared, and exclaimed exultingly : " By thine honourable assistance have I slain the foe that had oppressed me during these many years. From henceforward I will for ever watch over thy safety." He then told the tale from the beginning to the wayfarer, who, notwithstanding that the whole matter seemed to him to have an ugly look, would have inquired more particularly into the rights of so strange a story. But at that moment day began to dawn, and he found himself alone. The next morning, from the foot of the grave a stream of blood was seen to flow ; and the sword also was blood-stained. The tale seems a most uncomfortable one ; but I tell it as it was told to me.

The Maiden of Katsushika.

Where in the far-off eastern land
The cock first crows at dawn,
The people still hand down a tale
Of days long dead and gone.

They tell of Katsushika's maid,
Whose sash of country blue
Bound but a frock of home-spun hemp,
And kirtle coarse to view ;

Whose feet no shoe had e'er confined,
Nor comb passed through her hair ;
Yet all the queens in damask robes
Might nevermore compare

With this dear child, who smiling stood,
A flow'ret of the spring,—
In beauty perfect and complete,
Like to the full moon's ring.

And, as the summer moths that fly
Towards the flame so bright,
Or as the boats that seek the port
When fall the shades of night,

So came the suitors ; but she said :
" Why take me for your wife ?
Full well I know my humble lot,
I know how short my life." *

* The original of this stanza is obscure, and the native commentators have no satisfactory interpretation to offer.

So where the dashing billows beat
On the loud-sounding shore,
Hath Katsushika's tender maid
Her home for evermore.

Yes! 'tis a tale of days long past ;
But, list'ning to the lay,
It seems as I had gazed upon
Her face but yesterday.

(ANON.)

To the slight, but undoubtedly very ancient, tradition preserved in the foregoing ballad, there is nothing to add from any authentic source. Popular fancy, however, has been busy filling up the gaps, and introduces a cruel stepmother, who, untouched by the piety of the maiden in drawing water for her every day from the only well whose water she cares to drink, is so angry with her for, by her radiant beauty, attracting suitors to the house, that the poor girl ends by drowning herself, upon which the neighbours declare her to be a goddess, and erect a temple in her honour. Both the temple and the well are still among the show-places in the environs of Tōkyō.

The Beggar's Complaint.*

The heaven and earth they call so great,
For me are mickle small ;
The sun and moon they call so bright,
For me ne'er shine at all.

* In the original the title is "The Beggar's Dialogue," there being two poems, of which that here translated is the second. The first one, which is put into the mouth of an unmarried beggar, who takes a cheerier view of poverty, is not so well-fitted for translation into English.

Are all men sad, or only I ?
And what have I obtained,—
What good the gift of mortal life,
That prize so rarely gained,*

If naught my chilly back protects
But one thin grass-cloth coat,
In tatters hanging like the weeds
That on the billows float,—

If here in smoke-stained, darksome hut,
Upon the bare cold ground,
I make my wretched bed of straw,
And hear the mournful sound,—

Hear how mine agèd parents groan,
And wife and children cry,
Father and mother, children, wife,
Huddling in misery,—

If in the rice-pan, nigh forgot,
The spider hangs its nest,†
And from the hearth no smoke goes up
Where all is so unblest ?

And now, to make our wail more deep,
That saying is proved true
Of “snipping what was short before” :—
Here comes to claim his due

* Because, according to the Buddhist doctrine of perpetually recurring births, it is at any given time more probable that the individual will come into the world in the shape of one of the lower animals.

† A literal translation of the Japanese idiom.

The village provost, stick in hand,
 He's shouting at the door ;—
 And can such pain and grief be all
 Existence has in store ?

Stanza.

Shame and despair are mine from day to day ;
 But, being no bird, I cannot fly away.

(ANON.)

A Frontier Soldier's Regrets on Leaving Home.*

When I left to keep guard on the frontier
 (For such was the monarch's decree),
 My mother, with skirt uplifted,†
 Drew near and fondled me ;

And my father, the hot tears streaming
 His snow-white beard adown,

* The "Frontiers" in the early part of the eighth century of our era were, north, at a line drawn roughly across the main island of Japan at latitude 38°, and separating the Japanese proper from the aboriginal Ainos, and, south, the island of Kyūshū. Neither Yezo nor Luchu had as yet been added to the empire. Troops sent to Korea (see p. 57) were likewise said to be doing "frontier service." The mention of embarking at Naniwa (near the site of the modern treaty-port of Osaka) shows that it was on duty in the south or west that the author of this piece was sent.

† The Japanese commentators do not help us much towards a comprehension of this curious passage (lit. took up in her fingers the lower part of her skirt, and stroked"). One of them supposes that she lifted up her skirt in order to be better able to walk towards her son and caress him.

Besought me to tarry, crying :
 " Alas ! when thou art gone,

" When thou leav'st our gate in the morning,
 No other sons have I,
 And mine eyes will long to behold thee
 As the weary years roll by ;

" So tarry but one day longer,
 And let me find some relief
 In speaking and hearing thee speak to me ! "
 So wail'd the old man in his grief.

And on either side came pressing
 My wife and my children dear,
 Flutt'ring like birds, and with garments
 Besprinkled with many a tear ;

And clasp'd my hands, and would stay me,
 For 'twas so hard to part ;
 But mine awe of the sovereign edict
 Constrained my loving heart.

I went ; yet each time the pathway
 O'er a pass through the mountains did wind,
 I'd turn me round—ah ! so lovingly !—
 And ten thousand times gaze behind.

But farther still, and still farther,
 Past many a land I did roam,
 And my thoughts were all thoughts of sadness,
 All loving, and thoughts of home ;—

Till I came to the shores of Sumi,
 When the sovereign gods * I prayed,
 With offerings so humbly offered,—
 -And this the prayer that I made :—

“ Being mortal, I know not how many
 The days of my life may be ;
 And now the perilous pathway
 That leads o’er the plain of the sea,

“ Past unknown islands will bear me :
 But grant that while I am gone
 No hurt may touch father or mother,
 Or the wife now left all alone ! ”

c

c

Yes, such was my prayer to the sea-gods ;
 And now the unnumber’d oars, †
 And the ship and the seamen to bear me
 From breezy Naniwa’s shores

Are there at the mouth of the river :—
 Oh ! tell the dear ones at home,
 That I’m off as the day is breaking
 To row o’er the ocean foam ‡

(ANON.)

* Their names are Sokozutsuo, Nakazutsuo, and Uwazutsuo, and together they rule the sea. With them is often associated the semi-fabulous Empress Jingō, who is said to have conquered Korea in the third century of our era.

† In the earliest Japanese literature there is but little mention made of sailing, and even so late as the tenth century the oar would seem to have remained the chief means of propulsion at sea.

‡ To whom this request is made does not appear.

LOVE SONGS.

Song.

COMPOSED BY THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF ON BEHOLDING
THE MOUNTAINS, WHEN THE MIKADO MADE A
PROGRESS TO THE DISTRICT OF AYA IN THE
PROVINCE OF SANUKI.*

The long spring day is o'er, and dark despond
My heart invades, and lets the tears flow down,
As all alone I stand, when from beyond
The mount our heav'n-sent monarch's throne doth
crown

There breathes the twilight wind and turns my sleeve.
Ah, gentle breeze ! to turn, home to return,
Is all my prayer ; I cannot cease to grieve
On this long toilsome road ; I burn, I burn !

* This commander-in-chief's name is not to be ascertained. The Mikado mentioned would seem to be Jomei, who, according to the history, made a progress to the hot baths of Aya in the winter of A.D. 639-640. Sanuki is one of the four provinces forming the island of Shikoku, which lies between the Inland Sea and the Pacific Ocean. Tsunu is a village on the coast. Salt-burning, as it is called, is still a considerable industry in the maritime districts of Japan.

Yes ! the poor heart I used to think so brave
 Is all afire, though none the flame may see,
 Like to the salt-kilns there by Tsunu's wave,
 Where toil the fisher-maidens wearily.

(ANON.)

Lines

SENT TO HIS MISTRESS WHEN THE POET WAS LEAVING
 THE PROVINCE OF IWAMI* TO GO UPON IMPERIAL
 SERVICE TO THE CAPITAL.

Tsunu's shore, Iwami's brine,
 To all other eyes but mine
 Seem, perchance, a lifeless mere,
 And sands that ne'er the sailor cheer.
 Ah, well-a-day ! no ports we boast,
 And dead the sea that bathes our coast ;
 But yet I trow the wingèd breeze
 Sweeping at morn across our seas,
 And the waves at eventide
 From the depths of ocean wide,
 Onward to Watazu bear
 The deep-green seaweed, rich and fair ;
 And like that seaweed, gently swaying,
 Wingèd breeze and waves obeying,
 So thy heart hath swayed and bent
 And crowned my love with thy consent.

* On the north-west coast of the main island of Japan. There is no rise and fall of the tide in this portion of the Japan Sea,—a fact all the more remarkable, as the tides are particularly strong on the opposite shores of Korea. Tsunu and Watazu are the names of villages, the former not to be confounded with Tsunu in Sanuki. It was at Tsunu that the poet's mistress dwelt.

But, dear heart ! I must away,
 As fades the dew when shines the day ;
 Nor aught my backward looks avail,
 Myriad times cast down the vale
 From each turn the winding road
 Takes upward ; for thy dear abode
 Farther still and farther lies,
 And hills on hills between us rise.
 Ah ! bend ye down, ye cruel peaks,
 That the gate my fancy seeks,
 Where sits my pensive love alone,
 To mine eyes again be shown !

(HITOMARO.)

Love is Pain. ♡

'Twas said of old, and still the ages say,
 " The lover's path is full of doubt and woe."
 Of me they spake : I know not, nor can know,
 If she I sigh for will my love repay.
 My head sinks on my breast ; with bitter strife
 My heart is torn, and grief she cannot see.
 All unavailing is this agony
 To help the love that has become my life.

(ANON.)

No Tidings.

The year has come, the year has gone again,
 And still no tidings of mine absent love :
 Through the long days of spring all heaven above
 And earth beneath re-echo with my pain.

In dark cocoon my mother's silkworms dwell ;
 Like them, a captive, through the livelong day
 Alone I sit and sigh my soul away,
 For ne'er to any I my love may tell.

Like to the *pine*-trees I must stand and *pine*,*
 While downward slanting fall the shades of night,
 Till my long sleeve of purest snowy white
 With showers of tears is steeped in bitter brine.

(ANON.)

Love is All.

WHERE in spring the sweetest flowers
 Fill Mount Kaminabi's bowers,
 Where in autumn, dyed with red,
 Each ancient maple rears its head,
 And Aska's † flood, with sedges lin'd,
 As a belt, the mound doth bind :—
 There see my heart,—a reed that sways,
 Nor aught but love's swift stream obeys,
 And now, if, like the dew, dear maid,
 Life must fade, then let it fade :
 My secret love is not in vain,
 For thou lov'st me back again.‡

(ANON.)

* The play in the original is on the word *matsu*, which has the double signification of "a pine-tree" and "to wait."

† Thus pronounced, but properly written Asuka.

‡ Though no formal comparison is expressed, the allusions to the blossoms, to the ruddy tint, and to the girdle, are meant to apply to the poet's mistress as well as to the scenery of Kaminabi. These suggestions, as it were from without, are much sought after by the poets of Japan.

Homeward.

From Kaminabi's crest
 The clouds descending pour in sheeted rain,
 And, 'midst the gloom, the wind sighs o'er the plain :—
 Oh ! he that sadly press'd,
 Leaving my loving side, alone to roam
 Magami's desolate moor, has he reach'd home ?

(ANON.)

The Maiden and her Dog.

As the bold huntsman on some mountain path
 Waits for the stag he hopes may pass that way,
 So wait I for my love both night and day :
 Then bark not at him, as thou fear'st my wrath !

(ANON.)

Secret Love.

If as my spirit yearns for thine
 Thine yearns for me, why thus delay ?
 And yet, what answer might be mine
 If, pausing on her way,
 Some gossip bade me tell
 Whence the deep sighs that from my bosom swell ?

And thy dear name my lips should pass,
 My blushes would our loves declare ;

No, no ! I'll say my longing was
 To see the moon appear
 O'er yonder darkling hill ;
 Yet 'tis on thee mine eyes would gaze their fill !
 (ANON.)

He comes not.*

He comes not ! 'tis in vain I wait ;
 The crane's wild cry strikes on mine ear,
 The tempest howls, the hour is late,
 Dark is the raven night and drear :
 And, as I thus stand sighing,
 The snowflakes round me flying
 Light on my sleeve, and freeze it crisp and clear.

Sure 'tis too late ! he cannot come ;
 Yet trust I still that we may meet,
 As sailors gaily rowing home
 Trust in their ship so safe and fleet.
 Though waking hours conceal him,
 Oh ! may my dreams reveal him,
 Filling the long, long night with converse sweet !
 (ANON.)

The Omen.

[The reference in this song is to an old superstition. It used to be supposed that the chance words, caught from the mouths of passers-by, would solve any doubt or question

* The translation is here made, not from the standard text, but from a slightly varying one quoted in the "*Ryakuge*" commentary.

to which it might otherwise be impossible to obtain an answer. This was called *yū-ura*, or "evening divination," on account of its being practised in the evening. It has been found impossible in this instance to follow the original very closely.]

Yes ! 'twas the hour when all my hopes
 Seemed idle as the dews that shake
 And tremble in their lotus-cups
 By deep Tsurugi's lake,—
 'Twas then the omen said :
 " Fear not ! he'll come his own dear love to wed."

What though my mother bids me flee
 Thy fond embrace ? No heed I take ;
 As pure, as deep my love for thee
 As Kiyosumi's lake.
 One thought fills all my heart :
 When wilt thou come no more again to part ?
(ANON.)

Rain and Snow.

For ever on Mikane's crest,
 That soars so far away,
 The rain it rains in ceaseless sheets,
 The snow it snows all day.

And ceaseless as the rain and snow
 That fall from heaven above,
 So ceaselessly, since first we met,
 I love my darling love.

(ANON.)

Parted by the Stream.

Here on one side of the stream I stand,
And gaze on my love on the other strand.
Oh ! not to be with her, what sadness !
Oh ! not to be with her, what madness !

If but a red-lacquered skiff were mine,
With paddles strewn over with pearls so fine,
Then would I pass the river,
And dwell with my love for ever !

(ANON.)

He and She.

He. To Hatsúse's vale I'm come,
To woo thee, darling, in thy home ;
But the rain rains down apace,
And the snow veils ev'ry place,
And now the pheasant 'gins to cry,
And the cock crows to the sky :
Now flees the night, the night hath fled,
Let me in to share thy bed !

She. To Hatsúse's vale thou'rt come,
To woo me, darling, in my home :
But my mother sleeps hard by,
And my father near doth lie ;
Should I but rise, I'll wake her ear ;
Should I go out, then he will hear :
The night hath fled ! it may not be,
For our love's a mystery !

(ANON.)

Husband and Wife.

Wife. While other women's husbands ride
 Along the road in proud array,
 My husband up the rough hillside
 On foot must wend his weary way.

The grievous sight with bitter pain
 My bosom fills, and many a tear
 Steals down my cheek, and I would fain
 Do ought to help my husband dear.

Come ! take the mirror and the veil,
 My mother's parting gifts to me ;
 In barter they must sure avail
 To buy an horse to carry thee !

Husband. An I should purchase me an horse,
 Must not my wife still sadly walk ?
 No, no ! though stony is our course,
 We'll trudge along and sweetly talk.

(ANON.)

The Pearls.*

Oh ! he my prince, that left my side
 O'er the twain Lover Hills† to roam,

* For the reference in this song to the "evening horoscope," see p. 35.

† Mount Lover and Mount Lady-love (Se-yama and Imoyama), in the province of Yamato. Between them ran the rapid Yoshino-gawa, which has ended by sweeping away the Lover's Mount,—at least so the translator was told by the ferryman at the

Saying that in far Kishu's tide
 He'd hunt for pearls to bring them home,

When will he come? With trembling hope
 I hie me to the busy street
 To ask the evening horoscope,
 That straightway thus gives answer meet—

"The lover dear, my pretty girl,
 For whom thou waitest, comes not yet,
 Because he's seeking ev'ry pearl
 Where out at sea the billows fret.

"He comes not yet, my pretty girl!
 Because among the riplets clear
 He's seeking, finding ev'ry pearl;
 'Tis that delays thy lover dear.

"Two days at least must come and go,
 Sev'n days at most will bring him back;
 'Twas he himself that told me so:
 Then cease fair maid, to cry Alack!"

(ANON.)

Lines

COMPOSED ON BEHOLDING AN UNACCOMPANIED DAMSEL
 CROSSING THE GREAT BRIDGE OF KŌCHI.

Across the bridge, with scarlet lacquer glowing,
 That o'er the Katashiwa's stream is laid,

river in the summer of 1876; and from the boat there was but one mountain to be seen in the direction indicated. Perhaps there was never more than one, save in the minds of the Japanese poets, who are very fond of playing with these romantic names.

All trippingly a tender girl is going,
 In bodice blue and crimson skirt arrayed.
 None to escort her : would that I were knowing
 Whether alone she sleeps on virgin bed,
 Or if some spouse has won her by his wooing :—
 Tell me her house ! I'll ask the pretty maid !

(ANON.)

Evening.

From the loud wave-wash'd shore
 Wend I my way,
 Hast'ning o'er many a flow'r,
 At close of day,—
 On past Kusaka's crest,
 Onward to thee,
 Sweet as the loveliest
 Flower of the lea !

(ANON.)

A note to the original says: "The name of the composer of the above song is not given because he was of obscure rank," a reason which will sound strange to European ears. See, however, the introductory matter to Part IV.

À Maiden's Lament.

Full oft he sware, with accents true and tender,
 "Though years roll by, my love shall ne'er wax old !"
 And so to him my heart I did surrender,
 Clear as a mirror of pure burnish'd gold ;

And from that day, unlike the seaweed bending
To ev'ry wave raised by the autumn gust,
Firm stood my heart, on him alone depending,
As the bold seaman in his ship doth trust.

Is it some cruel god that hath bereft me ?
Or hath some mortal stol'n away his heart ?
No word, no letter since the day he left me.
Nor more he cometh, ne'er again to part !

In vain I weep, in helpless, hopeless sorrow,
From earliest morn until the close of day ;
In vain, till radiant dawn brings back the morrow,
I sigh the weary, weary nights away.

No need to tell how young I am and slender,—
A little maid that in thy palm could lie :
Still for some message comforting and tender
I pace the room in sad expectancy.

(THE LADY SAKANOUYE.)

Song

COMPOSED ON ASCENDING MOUNT MIKASA.*

Oft in the misty Spring
The vapours roll o'er Mount Mikasa's crest,
While, pausing not to rest,
The birds each morn with plaintive note do sing.

* In the province of Yamato, close to Nara, the ancient capital

Like to the mists of Spring
 My heart is rent ; for, like the song of birds,
 Still all unanswer'd ring
 The tender accents of my passionate words.
 I call her ev'ry day
 Till daylight fades away ;
 I call her ev'ry night
 Till dawn restores the light ;—
 But my fond pray'rs are all too weak to bring
 My darling back to sight.

(AKAHITO.)

Song

ASKING FOR PEARLS TO SEND HOME TO NARA.

They tell me that the fisher-girls
 Who steer their course o'er Susu's* brine,
 Dive 'neath the waves and bring up pearls :—
 Oh ! that five hundred pearls were mine !

Forlorn upon our marriage-bed,
 My wife, my darling sweet and true,
 Must lay her solitary head
 Since the sad hour I bade adieu,

No more, methinks, when shines the dawn,
 She combs her dark dishevell'd hair :

* A place in the province of Noto, the little peninsula that juts out into the Japan Sea on the north-west coast.

She counts the months since I am gone,
She counts the days with many a tear.

If but a string of pearls were mine,
I'd please her with them, and I'd say,
"With flags and orange-blossoms * twine
Them in a wreath on summer's day."

(YAKAMOCHI.)

The Flowers of my Garden.

Sent by the sov'reign lord to sway
The farthest lands that own his might,
To Koshi's † wilds I came away,
Where stretch the snows all wintry white.

And now five years are past and gone,
And still I sleep on widowed bed,
Nor loose my belt, nor, being thus lone,
May pillow on thine arm my head,

But as a solace for my heart,
Before my dwelling, pinks I sow,
And lilies small, with gard'ner's art
Ta'en from the summer moor below ;

* Literally, the *tachibana* (*citrus mandarinus*), one of the orange tribe.

† Then the most northern province of the empire, on the Aino border.

And never can I leave the house
And see them flow'ring, but I think
On when I'll see my lily spouse,
My spouse as fair as any pink.

Sweet dreams of love ! ah ! came ye not
The anguish of mine heart to stay,
In this remote and savage spot
I could not live one single day.

(YAKAMOCHI.)

ELEGIES.

Elegy on the Death of the Mikado Tenji.

BY ONE OF HIS LADIES.

Alas ! poor mortal maid ! unfit to hold
High converse with the glorious gods above,*
Each morn that breaks still finds me unconsoled,
Each hour still hears 'me sighing for my love.

Wert thou a precious stone, I'd clasp thee tight
Around mine arm ; wert thou a silken dress,
I'd ne'er discard thee either day or night ;—
Last night, sweet love ! I dreamt I saw thy face.

(ANON.)

Elegy on the Death of Prince Hfnami.

[This prince died A. D. 689 in the twenty-second year of his age. His father, Temmu, who died three years previously, had been temporarily succeeded during the

* Including, of course the departed and deified Mikado.

statutory years of mourning and the troublous times that ensued, by his consort, the Empress *Jitō*, from whom the throne was to have passed to Prince *Hinami* as soon as circumstances would permit of the ceremony of his accession.

The first strophe of the elegy deals with the fabulous early history, relating the appointment by a divine council of *Ninigino-Mikoto* as first emperor of the dynasty of the gods in Japan. From him Prince *Hinami* was descended, and his death is, therefore, in the second strophe, figured as a flight back to heaven, his ancestral home, motivated by the inutility of his presence in a world where his mother reigned supreme. The third strophe expresses the grief of the nation, and paints the loneliness of the tomb at *Mayumi*, which is represented by the poet as a palace where the Prince dwells in solitude and silence. The closing lines refer to the watchers by the tomb, who are removed after a certain time.]

I.

When began the earth and heaven,
 By the banks of heaven's river *
 All the mighty gods assembled,
 All the mighty gods held council,
 Thousand myriads held high council ;
 And (for that her sov'reign grandeur
 The great goddess of the day-star
 Rul'd th' ethereal realms of heaven)
 Downward through the many-pil'd
 Welkin did they waft her grandson,
 Bidding him, till earth and heaven,
 Waxing old, should fall together,
 O'er the middle land of Reed-plains,
 O'er the land of waving Rice-fields, †
 Spread abroad his power imperial.

* The Milky Way.

† Old poetical names for Japan.

II.

But not his Kiyomi's palace :
'Tis his sov'reign's, her's the empire ;
And the sun's divine descendant,
Ever soaring, passeth upward
Through the heav'n's high rocky portals.

III.

Why, dear prince, oh ! why desert us ?
Did not all beneath the heaven,
All that dwell in earth's four quarters,
Pant, with eye and heart uplifted,
As for heav'n-sent rain in summer,
For thy rule of flow'ry fragrance,
For thy plenilune of empire ?
Now on lone Mayumi's hillock, '
Firm on everlasting columns,
Pilest thou a lofty palace,
Whence no more, when day is breaking,
Sound thine edicts awe-compelling.
Day to day is swiftly gather'd,
Moon to moon, till e'en thy faithful
Servants from thy palace vanish.

(HITOMARO.)

On the Death of the Poet's Mistress.

How fondly did I yearn to gaze
(For was not there the dear abode
Of her whose love lit up my days ?)
On Karu's often-trodden road.*

But should I wander in and out
Morning and evening ceaselessly,
Our loves were quickly noised about,
For eyes enough were there to see.

So trusting that, as tendrils part
To meet again, so we might meet,
As in deep rocky gorge my heart,
Unseen, unknown, in secret beat.

But like the sun at close of day,
And as behind a cloud the moon,
So passed my gentle love away,
An autumn leaf ta'en all too soon.

When came the fatal messenger,
I knew not what to say or do :—
But who might sit and simply hear ?
Rather, methought, of all my woe,

* Karu's Road seems to have been the name of the village. It was in the province of Yamato, not far from the capital.

Haply one thousandth part might find
 Relief if my due feet once more,
 Where she so often trod, should wind
 Through Karu's streets, and past her door.

But mute that voice, nor all the crowd
 Could show her like or soothe my care ;
 So, calling her dear name aloud,
 I waved my sleeve in blank despair.

(HITOMARO.)

Lines

O
 SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN WRITTEN ON THE OCCASION OF
 THE DEATH OF THE PRINCE OF MINO (DIED A.D.
 708), FATHER OF PRINCE TACHIBANA-NO-MOROYE,
 COMPILER OF THE MANYŌSHU.

O ye steeds the Prince of Mino
 Stabled in his western stables !
 O ye steeds the Prince of Mino
 Stabled in his eastern stables !
 Is it for your food ye whinny ?
 Then the fodder I will bring you.
 Is it for your drink ye whinny ?
 Then the water I will bring you.
 Wherefore neigh the milk-white chargers ?

Ah ! methinks these steeds have bosoms,
 For their voice is chang'd and sadden'd.

(ANON.)

Elegy on the Poet's Young Son Furubi.

Sev'n* are the treasures mortals most do prize,
But I regard them not :
One only jewel could delight mine eyes,—
The child that I begot.

My darling boy, who with the morning sun
Began his joyous day ;
Nor ever left me, but with childlike fun
Would make me help him play ;

Who'd take my hand when eve its shadows spread,
Saying, " I'm sleepy grown ;
'Twixt thee and mother I would lay my head :
Oh ! leave me not alone ! "

Then, with his pretty prattle in mine ears,
I'd lie awake and scan
The good and evil of the coming years,
And see the child a man.

And, as the seaman trusts his bark, I'd trust
That nought could harm the boy :
Alas ! I wist not that the whirling gust
Would shipwreck all my joy !

* Viz., gold, silver, emeralds, crystals, rubies, amber (or coral or the diamond), and agate.

Then with despairing, helpless hands I grasp'd
The sacred mirror's sphere ; *
And round my shoulder I my garments clasp'd,
And pray'd with many a tear :

" 'Tis yours, great gods, that dwell in heav'n on high,
Great gods of earth ! 'tis yours
To heed or heed not, a poor father's cry,
Who worships and implores ! "

Alas ! vain pray'rs, that now no more avail !
He languish'd day by day,
Till e'en his infant speech began to fail,
And life soon ebb'd away.

Stagg'ring with grief I strike my sobbing breast,
And wildly dance and groan :
Ah ! such is life ! the child that I caress'd
Far from mine arms hath flown !

* The part played by the mirror in the devotions of the Japanese is carried back by them to a tale in their mythology which relates the disappearance into a cavern of the Sun-goddess Amaterasu, and the manner in which she was enticed forth by being led to believe that her reflection in a mirror that was shown to her was another deity more lovely than herself. The tying up of the wide sleeve (originally by some creeping plant, and later by a riband), which is still commonly practised by the lower classes when engaged in any manual labour, was also naturally adopted by the priests when making their offerings of fruits, &c., and thus passed into a sign of devotion. In this place may also be mentioned the *nusa*,—offerings of hemp, a plant always looked upon as one of the most precious of the productions of the soil, and presented to the gods as such, or used in the ceremony of purification (see p. 77). In modern times, worthless paper has been substituted for the precious hemp, and the meaning of the ceremony entirely lost sight of, some of the common people even supposed that the gods come down and take up their residence in the strips of paper.

Short Stanza on the Same Occasion.

So young, so young ! he cannot know the way :
 On Hades' porter * I'll a bribe bestow,
 That on his shoulders the dear infant may
 Be safely carried to the realms below.

(*Attributed to OKURA.*)

Elegy on the Poet's Wife.

The gulls that twitter on the rush-grown shore
 When fall the shades of night,
 That o'er the waves in loving pairs do soar
 When shines the morning light,—
 'Tis said e'en these poor birds delight
 To nestle each beneath his darling's wing
 That, gently fluttering,
 Through the dark hours wards off the hoar-frost's might.

Like to the stream that finds
 The downward path it never may retrace,
 Like to the shapeless winds,
 Poor mortals pass away without a trace :
 So she I love has left her place,
 And, in a corner of my widowed couch,
 Wrapp'd in the robe she wove me, I must crouch
 Far from her fond embrace.

(NIBI.)

* The reference is a Buddhist one. In a Sutra entitled "*Jū-ō Kyō*" details are given of several infernal attendants.

Elegy on Yuki-no-Muraji Iyemaro,

WHO DIED AT THE ISLAND OF IKI ON HIS WAY TO KOREA.

[Of this personage nothing further is known. The word *Kara* in the poem signifies Korea, although in modern Japanese it is exclusively used to designate China. In ancient times the Mikados laid claim to the possession of Korea—a claim said to have been substantiated by two conquests, one by the Empress Jingō in the beginning of the third century of our era, the other by the armies of Hideyoshi, the Napoleon of Japan, who practically ruled the country during the latter part of the sixteenth century. It must, however, be admitted that the warrior-empress is at most but a legendary character, and that, whatever may be the truth as to the alleged early conquest of Korea by the Japanese, the latter were undoubtedly led captive by the arts and letters of their more cultivated neighbours. As these lines go to press, Korea has actually become a Japanese dependency.]

Sent by the sov'reign monarch to hold sway
O'er Kara's land, he left his native soil ;
But ye, his kinsmen, ne'er the gods did pray,
Or else, perchance, the mats ye did defile.*

"In autumn," spake he, "I will come again,
"Dear mother!" But that autumn is forgot ;
And days roll by, and moons do wax and wane,
And still they watch, and still he cometh not.

* Reference is here made to the custom, not yet extinct, of leaving untouched during a certain time the apartment recently occupied by one who has started on a journey. The idea is that to sweep the mats at once would be, as it were, to wipe him out of remembrance. On the second day, at earliest, the room is cleaned, and food for the absent one brought in at the accustomed hours.

For he ne'er lighted on that distant shore,
Though far he sailed from fair Yamato's* lea;
But on this cragged rock for evermore
He dwells among the islands of the sea.

(ANON.)

Elegy on the Death of the Korean Nun Rigwan.

[A note appended to the original poem tells us that Rigwan, desirous of placing herself under the beneficent sway of the Japanese Emperor, crossed over in the year 714, and for the space of one-and-twenty years sojourned in the house of the Prime Minister Ōtomo. She died in 735 while the Minister and his wife were away at the mineral baths of Arima, a mountain retreat not far from the present port of Kōbe. The daughter of the house, Sakanouye, was alone present at her death and interment, and afterwards sent the following elegy to her mother at Arima. During the sixth, seventh, and eighth centuries there was a very considerable immigration from Korea into Japan. Artisans and teachers of every description, and even monks and nuns, flocked to what was then a new country.]

Oftimes in far Korea didst thou hear
Of our Cipango as a goodly land;
And so, to parents and to brethren dear
Bidding adieu, thou sailed'st to the strand

* Yamato, though properly the particular designation of one of the central provinces, is often used as a name for the whole of Japan. Nara, the ancient capital, is situated in Yamato, and most of the older temporary capitals were within its limits.

Of these domains that own th' imperial pow'r,
Where glitt'ring palaces unnumber'd rise ;
Yet such might please thee not, nor many a bow'r
Where village homesteads greet the pilgrim's eyes :

But in this spot, at Saoyama's* base,
Some secret influence bade thee find thy rest,—
Bade seek us out with loving eagerness,
As seeks the weeping infant for the breast.

And here with aliens thou didst choose to dwell,
Year in, year out, in deepest sympathy ;
And here thou builtest thee an holy cell ;
And so the peaceful years went gliding by.

But ah ! what living thing^c mote yet avoid
Death's dreary summons ?—And thine hour did sound
When all the friends on whom thine heart relied
Slept on strange pillows on the mossy ground,†

So, while the morn lit up Kasúga's crest,
O'er Saogawa's flood thy corse they bore,
To fill a tomb upon yon mountain's breast,
And dwell in darkness drear for evermore.

No words, alas ! nor efforts can avail :
Nought can I do, poor solitary child !

* A mountain in the province of Yamato. The river Saogawa, mentioned a little farther on, runs past its base.

† This line is an adaptation of the Japanese term *kusa-makura*, literally "a pillow of herbs," itself the "pillow-word" for the word *journey*.

Nought can I do but make my bitter wail,
And pace the room with cries and gestures wild,

Ceaselessly weeping, till my snowy sleeve
Is wet with tears. Who knows? Perchance again
Wafted they're borne upon the sighs I heave
On Arima's far distant heights to rain.

(SAKANOUYE.)

MISCELLANEOUS POEMS.

Lines

COMPOSED BY THE EMPEROR JOMEI ON THE OCCASION
OF HIS ASCENDING MOUNT KAGU,* AND CONTEM-
PLATING THE SURROUNDING COUNTRY.

Countless are the mountain-chains
Tow'ring o'er Cipango's plains ;
But fairest is Mount Kagu's peak,
Whose heav'nward soaring heights I seek
And gaze on all my realms beneath,—
Gaze on the land where vapours wreathe
O'er many a cot ; gaze on the sea,
Where cry the seagulls merrily.
Yes ! 'tis a very pleasant land,
Fill'd with joys on either hand,
Sweeter than aught beneath the sky,
Dear islands of the dragon-fly ! †

* Near Nara.

† One of the ancient names of Japan, given to the country on account of a supposed resemblance in shape to that insect. The dragon-flies of Japan are various and very beautiful.

The Mikado's Bow.*

When the dawn is shining,
 He takes it up and fondles it with pride ;
 When the day's declining,
 He lays it by his pillow's side.
 Hark to the twanging of the string !
 This is the bow of our Great Lord and King !
 Now to the morning chase they ride,
 Now to the chase again at eventide :
 Hark to the twanging of the string !
 This is the bow of our Great Lord and King !
(HASHIBITO.)

Spring and Autumn.

(AN ODE COMPOSED IN OBEDIENCE TO THE COMMANDS OF
 THE MIKADO TENJI.)

When Winter turns to Spring,
 Birds that were songless make their songs resound,
 Flow'rs that were flow'rless cover all the ground ;
 Yet 'tis no perfect thing :—
 I cannot walk, so tangled is each hill ;
 So thick the herbs, I cannot pluck my fill.
 But in the autumn-tide
 I cull the scarlet leaves and love them dear,
 And let the green leaves stay, with many a tear,
 All on the fair hill-side :—

* The Mikado referred to is Jorei, who died in A.D. 841.

No time so sweet as that. Away ! away !
Autumn's the time I fain would keep alway.

(OHOGIMI.)

Spring.

When Winter turns to Spring,
The dews of morn in pearly radiance lie,
The mists of eve rise circling to the sky,
And Kaminabi's thickets ring
With the sweet notes the nightingale doth sing.

(ANON.)

The Brook of Hatsuse.

Pure is Hatsuse's mountain-brook,—
So pure it mirrors all the clouds of heaven ;
Yet here no fishermen for shelter look
When sailing home at even :
'Tis that there are no sandy reaches,
Nor shelving beaches,
Where the frail craft might find some shelt'ring nook.

Ah, well-a-day ! we have no sandy reaches :
But heed that not ;
Nor shelving beaches :
But heed that not !

Come a jostling and a hustling
O'er our billows gaily bustling :
Come, all ye boats, and anchor in this spot !

(ANON.)

Lines to a Friend.

Japan is not a land where men need pray,
For 'tis itself divine :—
Yet do I lift my voice in prayer and say :
“ May ev'ry joy be thine !

And may I too, if thou those joys attain,
Live on to see thee blest ! ”
Such the fond prayer, that, like the restless main,
Will rise within my breast.

(HITOMARO.)

[Japan is the dwelling-place of the gods, and the whole nation claims divine ancestry. Thus prayer, with them, were doubly useless. The gods are already on earth, therefore no petitions need be lifted up to heaven. Also the heart of man,—at least of Japanese man,—is naturally perfect : therefore he has only to follow the dictates of his heart, and he will do right. These are the tenets of Shintō,* claimed by the Japanese as their aboriginal religion, but in which any person conversant with the writings of the Chinese sages will not fail to detect the influence of their ways of thought. The Shintoists, moreover, are by no means consistent ; for, while deprecating the use of prayer, they have numerous and lengthy liturgies. A translation of some of these liturgies and an account of the

* Literally “the Way of the Gods”

modern attempt to infuse such new vitality into Shintō as might enable it to cope with the more potent influence of the Buddhist religion, will be found in some learned essays by Sir Ernest Satow, printed in the "Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan."]

The Bridge to Heaven.*

Oh ! that that ancient bridge
Hanging 'twixt heaven and earth were longer still !
Oh ! that yon mountain-ridge
So boldly tow'ring tow'red more boldly still !
Then from the moon on high
I'd fetch some drops of the life-giving stream,†—
A gift that might beseem
Our Lord the King, to make him live for aye !

(ANON.)

A Very Ancient Ode.

Mountains and ocean-waves
Around me lie ;
For ever the mountain-chains
Tower to the sky ;

* The poet alludes to the so-called *ama no uki-hashī*, or "floating bridge of heaven,"—the bridge by which, according to the Japanese mythology, the gods passed up and down in the days of old. The idea of such bridges seems to have been common in early times in Japan, for there are several traditions concerning them in various widely-separated provinces.

† The translator can discover no reference elsewhere to this lunar river or spring. The commentator Mabuchi says: "The poet uses this expression on account of the watery nature of the moon."

Fixed is the ocean
Immutably :—
Man is a thing of nought,
Born but to die !

(ANON.)

The Seventh Night of the Seventh Moon.

[The following poem requires some elucidation. The "Heavenly River" is the Milky Way. The Herdboy is a star in Aquila, and the Weaver is the star Vega. The fable of their being spouses or lovers who may never meet but on the seventh night of the seventh moon is extremely ancient, apparently owing its origin to some allusions to the movements of the two stars in question in the "*Shi King*," or "Book of Poetry," edited by Confucius. As might be expected, the legend has taken several forms. According to one version, the Weaver was a maiden who dwelt on the left bank of the River of Heaven, and who was so constantly employed in making garments for the offspring of the Emperor of Heaven (God), that she had no leisure to attend to the adorning of her person. At last, however, God, taking compassion on her loneliness, gave her in marriage to a Herdsman who dwelt upon the opposite bank of the stream. Hereupon the Weaver began to grow slack in her work ; and God in his anger made her recross the river, at the same time forbidding her husband to visit her more than once every year. Another story represents the pair as having been mortals who were married at the ages of fifteen and twelve, and who died at the ages of a hundred and three and ninety-nine respectively. After death, their spirits flew up to the sky, in the river watering which, the supreme divinity was unfortunately in the habit of performing his ablutions daily. No mortals, therefore, might pollute it by their touch, excepting on the seventh day of the seventh moon, when the deity, instead of bathing, went to listen to the reading of the

Buddhist scriptures. Japanese literature, like that of China, teems with allusions to the loves of the Herdboy and the Weaver, and the seventh day of the seventh moon is one of the most popular festivals in town and country.]

Since the hour when first begun
Heaven and earth their course to run,
Parted by the Heav'nly River
Stand the Herdboy and the Weaver :
For in each year these lovers may
Meet but for one single day.
To and fro the constant swain
Wanders in the heavenly plain,
Till sounds the hour when fore and aft
He's free to deck his tiny craft
In gallant trim, and ship the oar
To bear him to the opposing shore.

Now the autumn season leads,
When through the swaying, sighing reeds
Rustles the chill breath of even,
And o'er the foaming stream of heaven,
Heedless of the silv'ry spray,
He'll row exulting on his way,
And, with his arms in hers entwined,
Tell all the loving tale he pin'd
To tell her through the livelong year.

Yes ! the seventh moon is here ;
And I, though mortal, hail the night
That brings heav'n's lovers such delight.

(ANON.)

Recollections of My Children.

[To the verses are, in the original, prefixed the following lines of prose :—

“The holy Shaka Muni, letting drop verities from his golden mouth, says, ‘I love mankind as I love Ragora.’* And again he preaches, ‘No love exceedeth a parent’s love.’ Thus even so great a saint retained his love for his child. How much more, then, shall not the common run of men, love their children ?”]

Ne’er a melon can I eat,
But calls to mind my children dear ;
Ne’er a chestnut crisp and sweet,
But makes the lov’d ones seem more near.
Whence did they come my life to cheer ?
Before mine eyes they seem to sweep,
So that I may not even sleep.

Short Stanza on the Same Occasion.

What use to me the gold and silver hoard ?
What use to me the gems most rich and rare ?
Brighter by far,—ay ! bright beyond compare,—
The joys my children to my heart afford !

(YAMAGAMI-NO-OKURA.)

* Properly Rāhula, Buddha’s only son. Shaka, a corruption of Sakya, is the name commonly employed in Japan to designate the Indian prince Gautama, the founder of Buddhism, whom Europeans usually call Buddha.

Lines

COMPOSED ON THE OCCASION OF MY LORD ŌTOMO, THE
INSPECTOR OF TRIBUTE, MAKING THE ASCENT OF
MOUNT TSUKUBA.

[Who this Lord Otomo was is not certain, there being no sufficient grounds for supposing, with the commentator Keichū, that he was the same as the Prime Minister Ōtomo mentioned on page 77 as father of the poetess Sakanōye. Mount Tsukuba, in the province of Hitachi, is well seen from Tōkyō, rising with its two peaks of almost exactly equal height, at a distance of some sixty miles to the north of the city, and gaining from the flatness of the country, between its base and the coast, an appearance of dignity to which its actual elevation of only 3,000 feet would scarcely entitle it. The translator, on making the ascent, found a small shrine on either peak, one dedicated to the god, and the other to the goddess, of the locality.]

When my lord, who fain would look on
Great Tsukūba, double-crested,
To the highlands of Hitáchi
Bent his steps, then I, his servant,
Panting with the heats of summer,
Down my brow the sweat-drops dripping,
Breathlessly toil'd onward, upward,
Tangled roots of timber clutching.
"There, my lord ! behold the prospect !"
Cried I when we scal'd the summit.
And the gracious goddess gave us
Smiling welcome, while her consort
Condescended to admit us
Into these his sacred precincts,
O'er Tsukuba double-crested,
Where the clouds do have their dwelling

And the rain for ever raineth,
Shedding his divine refulgence,
And revealing to our vision
Ev'ry landmark that in darkness
And in shapeless gloom was shrouded ;—
Till for joy our belts we loosen'd,
Casting off constraint, and sporting
As at home we oft had sported.
Danker now than in the dulcet
Spring-time grew the summer grasses ;
Yet to-day our bliss was boundless.

Couplet.

When the great men of old pass'd by this way,
Could e'en their pleasures vie with ours to-day ?

(ANON.)

Ode to the Cuckoo.

Nightingales built the nest
Where, as a lonely guest,
First thy young head did rest,
Cuckoo so dear !
Strange to the father bird,
Strange to the mother bird
Sounded the note they heard,
Tender and clear.

Fleeing thy natal bow'rs
Bright with the silv'ry flow'rs,*
Oft in the summer hours
 Hither thou fliest;
Light'st on some orange † tall,
Scatt'ring the blossoms all,
And, while around they fall,
 Ceaselessly criest.

Though through the livelong day
Soundeth thy roundelay,
Never its accents may
 Pall on mine ear :
Come, take a bribe of me !
Ne'er to far regions flee ;
Dwell on mine orange-tree,
 Cuckoo so dear !

(ANON.)

Ode

COMPOSED ON THE OCCASION OF ASCENDING MOUNT
TSUKUBA, AND JOINING IN THE CHORIC DANCE.

Where many an eagle builds her nest
On Tsukuba's mountain-crest,
There the men and maids foregather,
And this the song they sing together :

* Literally, the blossoms of the w shrub (*Deutzia sieboldiana*), which are white.

† Literally, the *tachibana* (*Citrus mandarinus*), one of the orange tribe.

" I your mistress mean to woo !
 You may take and love mine too !
 For the gods that here do throne
 Ne'er this ancient use disown :
 So shut your eyes but for to-day,
 And find no fault howe'er we play ! "

(MUSHIMARO.)

Ode

RESPECTFULLY PRESENTED TO PRINCE TACHIBANA-NO-
 HIRONARI ON THE OCCASION OF HIS DEPARTURE AS
 AMBASSADOR TO THE COURT OF CHINA, WISHING
 HIM A PROSPEROUS VOYAGE AND A HAPPY RETURN.
 (A.D. 733.)

In the great days of old,
 When o'er the land the gods held sov'reign sway,
 Our fathers lov'd to say
 That the bright gods with tender care enfold
 The fortunes of Japan,
 Blessing the land with many an holy spell :
 And what they lov'd to tell
 We of this later age ourselves do prove ;
 For every living man
 May feast his eyes on tokens of their love.

Countless are the hosts attendant
 On the heav'n-establish'd throne
 Of the Mikado, bright descendant
 Of the goddess of the Sun :
 But on thee his special grace
 Lights to-day, for thou canst trace

From king to king thy noble birth
To the lords of all the earth ;
And to thee the word is given
Sacred missives to convey
From the resplendent Son of Heaven
To the far distant limits of Cathay.

May the great immortals dwelling
On the isles that line thy road,
And the gods who in the swelling
Billows make their dread abode,
Gather round and safely guide thee,
While, that nought but good betide thee,
That Great Spirit * in whose hand
Lie the fortunes of our land,
And all the gods of heaven and earth,
Flutt'ring down on airy pinions,
From the country of thy birth
Waft thee to Cathay's unknown dominions :

And when, thine embassy concluded,
Hither again thou think'st to come,
May the same great gods that brooded
O'er thy going, bring thee home ;

* What divinity should be understood by this term is a matter of debate among the native commentators. Probably it refers to Oanamuchi, the aboriginal monarch of the province of Izumo, who, according to the national traditions, peacefully relinquished the sovereignty of the country to the Mikado's ancestors, the heaven-descended gods, on the condition of receiving from them divine honours. One of the most interesting questions connected with the semi-fabulous early Japanese history is that as to whether this tradition may be interpreted so as to warrant the belief of the existence in Japan of a pre-Japanese civilisation.

May their fingers help thy vessel
 Surely with the waves to wrestle,
 As if across the azure line
 Thy path were ruled with ink and line,—
 That, round bold Chika's headland * turning,
 Soon thou land on Mitsu's shore.
 Oh ! tarry not ! for thee we're yearning ;
 On thee may Heav'n its richest blessings pour !

 (YAMAGAMI-NO OKURA.)

Another Ode

PRESENTED TO THE PRINCE ON THE SAME OCCASION.

Till the thread of life is broken
 Shall thine image fill my heart ;
 But the Sov'reign Lord * has spoken,
 And, poor mortals, we must part !

Where the crane, with accents wailing,
 On Naniwa's billowy strand
 Calls his mate when day is failing,
 There thou leav'st thy native land.

With the foam-capped waves to wrestle,
 In his place each oarsman sits ;

* A cape in the province of Hizen, not far from the site of the modern town of Nagasaki. This is a long way from Mitsu-no-Hama, near Nara, the vessel's final destination ; but the worst portion of the journey from China would be overpast, as the rest of the way lies through the Inland Sea.

† Not God or fate, but the Mikado.

Rounding Mitsu's cape, thy vessel
On past countless islands flits.

While, the sacred emblems taking*
To implore the heav'nly train,
I await thee : heed mine aching
Heart, and soon come home again !

(KASA-NO-KANAMURA ASON)

Lines

COMPOSED ON THE OCCASION OF PRINCE[○]OSA'S HUNTING
PARTY ON THE MOOR OF KARIJI.†

[Prince Osa was son of the Emperor Temmu, and died
A.D. 715.]

When our prince, the mighty monarch,
When our prince, of high-set splendour,
To the hunt, with many a horseman,
Marches o'er Kariji's moorland,
Kneeling low, the deer adore him,
Kneeling low, the quails surround him.
We, too, kneel like deer before him,
We, too, kneel like quails around him,
Giving true and trembling service ;

* See the note to p. 51.

† Kariji is by some taken as a common noun in the sense of "hunting field;" but it is better to regard it as the name of a place, probably situated in the neighbourhood of the modern village of Shishiji in the province of Yamato.

And our eyes and hearts, uplifted,
Seem to rest on heav'n's own radiance,
Ever piercing new perfections
In our prince, the mighty monarch !

(HITOMARO.)

Ode to Fusiyaama.*

There on the border, where the land of Kai †
Doth touch the frontier of Suruga's land,
A beauteous province stretch'd on either hand,
See Fusiyaama rear his head on high !

The clouds of heav'n in rev'rent wonder pause,
Nor may the birds those giddy heights assay,
Where melt thy snows amid thy fires away,
Or thy fierce fires lie quench'd beneath thy snows.

What name might fitly tell, what accents sing,
Thine awful, godlike grandeur ? 'Tis thy breast
That holdeth Narusawa's flood at rest,
Thy side whence Fujikawa's waters spring.

* Or Fuji, the great Japanese volcano, which even now is not quite extinct. Fujikawa is the name of a river, and Narusawa that of a lake now dried up. The lovely waterfalls of *Shira-ito*, which form by far the most charming feature of the landscape surrounding Fusiyaama, have been strangely passed over in silence by him as by the other poets his contemporaries.

† Pronounced *Ky*. Kai and Suruga are the names of provinces.

Great Fusi-yama, tow'ring to the sky !
A treasure art thou giv'n to mortal man,
A god-protector watching o'er Japan :—
On thee for ever let me feast mine eye !

(ANON.)

Verses

COMPOSED ON THE OCCASION OF AN IMPERIAL PROGRESS
TO THE SUMMER PALACE OF YOSHINO IN A.D. 725.

[Yoshino, justly famous for the beauty of its cherry-blossom, is situated in the province of Yamato, and has witnessed some of the most stirring events of Japanese history. During the fourteenth century, when what the author of "The Mikado's Empire" has aptly termed the "Wars of the Chrysanthemums" * split up the court and country into two hostile camps, Yoshino was the residence of the southern or legitimate sovereigns, and the lovely country surrounding it was the scene of perpetual bloody combats and hairbreadth escapes. Not far from Yoshino are the maple-trees of Tatsuta, the heights of Mount Kagu, Nara the ancient capital, all celebrated in Japanese song and story, while the palaces of Kyōtō and the blue waters of the lute-shaped lake of Ōmi are not far to seek.]

Beauteous is the woody mountain
Of imperial Yōshino ;
Fair and limpid is the fountain
Dashing to the vale below ;

* The chrysanthemum flower is one of the Imperial crests.

High beside whose upper reaches
 Warbles many a tiny bird,
 While upon its lower beaches
 Frogs' loud am'rous notes are heard.*

Far and near, in stately leisure,
 Pass the courtiers o'er the lea ;
 Ev'ry glance shows some new pleasure,
 And I pray thus tremblingly :

"Glorious deities that for ever
 O'er the heav'n and earth do reign !
 Grant that these our joys may never
 From fair Yôshino be ta'en !"

(KASA-NO-NAKAMURA ASON.)

[In the first moon of the fourth year of the period Jinki (A.D. 727), the nobles and courtiers had assembled in the fields of Kasuga, † and were diverting themselves with a game of polo, when the sky was suddenly overcast, and the rain poured down amid thunder and lightning, while the palace was left without guards or attendants. Thereupon the Mikado issued an edict confining the offenders to the guard-house, under strict prohibition of leaving its gates. The following ode was composed under the feeling of disappointment and vexation thus engendered.]

Spring his gentle beams is flinging
 O'er Kasûga's ivy-tangled lea ;

* The musical (?) voice of the frog is much admired by the Japanese, and is frequently alluded to in their poetry. They also, like the ancient Greeks, have a partiality for the cry of certain species of *cicadae*.

† Close to Nara.

To the hills the mists are clinging,
Takamátó's heights are ringing
With the nightingale's first melody.

All the court* for this entrancing
Hour had yearn'd—oh ! might it never end !—
Then upon our chargers prancing,
Gaily side by side advancing,
Through the fields our course we long'd to bend.

Ah ! could we have been foreknowing
This accurs'd, unutterable thing,
Then by Sao's waters flowing, •
Where the ferns and rushes growing
Line the strand 'mid birds' sweet carolling,

O'er our heads their branches twining,†
In the stream we might have lav'd us free :
Now the monarch's law, confining,
Bids us mourn away the shining
Hours of Spring in dark captivity.

(ANON.)

* The lines in the original answering to the commencement of this stanza are so corrupt as to be well-nigh unintelligible. Moto-ori's interpretation has been followed in the translation.

† One of the ceremonies of purification consisted in waving ferns and rushes over the person and then flinging them into the water. At a later period, for these plants were substituted the so-called *nusa* or *gohei*, strips of linen, and afterwards of paper. Religious ablutions are constantly referred to in the earliest poetry and history of the Japanese. "

Ode

WHICH, AT A PARTING FEAST, THE EMPEROR SHOMU *
CONDESCENDED TO COMPOSE FOR THREE NOBLES
ABOUT TO START ON THEIR SEVERAL CIRCUITS
THROUGH THE PROVINCES. (A.D. 732.)

If, like loyal men, ye up and carry
 To far realms your sov'reign lord's behest,
I within these halls of bliss may tarry,
 I my hands may fold upon my breast.

O'er your heads my sacred hands, extended,
 Shall caress, shall bless each faithful soul :
When ye come again, your labours ended,
 I, the king, will fill again this bowl.

Lament on Nara, the Deserted Capital.†

Yamato's land, that still with pow'r imperial
 Our monarchs rule in undivided sway,

* Reigned A.D. 724—756.

† The seat of government was definitively moved from Nara in A.D. 784, and continued to be at Kyōtō from that time until 1868.

Since first the gods came down from realms ethereal *
Hath never ceas'd those monarchs to obey.

Wherefore methought that while, in grand succession,
Prince after prince should rule earth's wide domain,
Throughout the myriad age's long procession
From Nara's palace would they choose to reign.†

Sweet Nara ! still in Mount Mikasa's bowers,
When circling mists proclaimed the pow'r of Spring,
Dark'ning the forest bloomed the cherry-flowers,
Nor ever ceas'd the birds their carolling.

Still, when mid-autumn's frost-touch'd dewes were falling,
High on Ikoma's ‡ often-burning crest
The lusty stag, for his dear consort calling,
O'er trampled lespedeza thickets press'd.§

Never thy hills might tire my gaze, and never
Far from thy dwellings might I wish to roam ;

* The first sovereign of the dynasty of the gods on earth, according to the Japanese mythology, was His Grandeur Minigi, to whom the more ancient aboriginal ruler Oanamuchi resigned his throne and domain (see note to p. 69.)

† Nara being in the province of Yamato.

‡ A mountain in the province of Kawachi, on whose summit, in ancient times, signal fires used to be lighted. Though discontinued nearly a century before the probable date of this poem, the ancient custom had bequeathed its name to one of the peaks, which was called Tobu-hi-ga-Oka, or the "Eminence of the Flying Fires."

§ In the later poetry the lespedeza flower is itself perpetually termed the stag's mate, doubtless on account of its blossoming at the time of year when these animals pair off.

Thy streets, stretch'd out across the plain for ever,
Each house some loyal and sturdy warrior's home.

And so I trusted that, till old and hoary,
The heav'ns and earth should on each other fall,
Nara might sparkle with perennial glory,
And Nara's palace hold the Lord of all.

But Nara, too, must yield, as yield all mortals,
To the great King's inscrutable commands:
Her beauty fades; the court deserts her portals,
Like birds of passage seeking other lands.

or

Here in these streets, where high-born throngs ad-
vancing,
And neighing steeds erst made the heav'ns resound,
No step is heard, no chargers more are prancing,
And desolation covers all the ground.

(SAKIMARO.)

A Stag's Lament.

[The following lines, and others which set forth in a similar strain the "Lamentations of a Crab," appear to have been composed with the intention of enforcing the Buddhist doctrine of the sinfulness of slaying any living creature.]

Oft in June, or earlier May-tide,
On Heguri's heights foregather
From afar the med'cine hunters,*
Where, amidst the mountain gorges,
By twin-soaring yew-trees shelter'd,
As with many a stalwart comrade,
Arm'd with bows and arm'd with arrows,
For the passing deer I waited,
Came a stag, and stood before me,
And thus 'gan his lamentation :—

“Sudden death is now my sentence ;
I must serve the mighty monarch,
And mine horns shall grace his sunshade,
And mine ears shall be his inkhorn,
And mine eyes shall be his mirror, “
And mine hoofs shall be his bow-notch,
And mine hairs shall grace his pencil,
And mine hide shall line his casket,
And my flesh shall be his mincemeat,
And my liver, too, his mincemeat,
And my cud shall be his seas'ning.
Men shall praise me, men shall praise me.
Saying, ‘Lo ! on one poor agèd
Stag these sev'nfold blossoms flower,
Eightfold blossoms flower sweetly !’ ” †

(ANON.)

* The flesh of the stag was supposed to possess medicinal properties.

† What in English are called “double-flowers” are termed by the Japanese “eightfold flowers.” The “sevenfold” is in the original put merely to fill up the verse, and has no special meaning.

Lines

COMPOSED WHEN THE POET COULD NOT CONTAIN HIMSELF
FOR JOY AT HAVING BEHELD IN A DREAM A
FAVOURITE HAWK THAT HE HAD LOST.*

Farthest of all the lands that own
The sov'reign monarch's might,
There lies a province wild and lone,
"Koshi the Snowy" hight.

So barren are its moors, that nought
But tangled grasses grow ;
So high its hills, that like mere rills
The distant rivers show.

There, when on panting summer night
The grayling dart around,
With cormorants and lanterns bright
Into their wherries bound

The fishermen, a merry crowd,
From off the shingly beach,
And row against the dashing flood
Through ev'ry crystal reach.

And when the hoar-frost 'gins to fall,
And Koshi's autumn moors
Are full of birds, my hawkers all
Assemble out of doors.

* The poet, at the time of composing this piece, was governor
of the province of Koshi in the north-west of the empire.

But none of their so vaunted stock
 With "Blackie" mote compare:—
 Big "Blackie" was a roof-tailed hawk,
 And a silver bell she bare.

At morn five hundred birds we'd start,
 And more at fall of day:
 Swift in her flight, swift to alight,
 She never miss'd her prey.

But while I gaz'd with smiling pride
 Upon my "Blackie" dear,
 Sure that in all the world beside
 Ne'er would arise her peer,

That ugly, vile, and craz'd old man,*
 All on a rainy day,
 Without a word, takes the dear bird
 Out hunting far away;

And, coming back, and coughing low,
 Tells me the bitter tale,
 How, soaring from the moor below,
 Heav'nward the hawk did sail,

On past Mishima's grassy plain
 And Futagami's height,
 Till, lost amid the clouds and rain,
 She vanish'd from the sight.

* My lord's hawker.

To tempt her home was past my pow'r :
Helpless and dumb I stood,
While flames my bosom did devour,
And sadly I did brood.

And yet, if haply some fond spell
Might lure her back to me,
Watchers I set, and many a net
All over hill and lea ;

And with the holy symbols white,
And glitt'ring mirror's sphere,*
Call'd on the gods of awful might
My sad complaint to hear.

So, as I waited at the shrine,
And sleep stole o'er mine eyes,
A fairy maid stood forth and said :—
“The hawk thy soul doth prize,

“Thy glorious ‘Blackie,’ is not lost ;
But o'er Matsúda's beach,
And where the fisher-boats are toss'd
On Himi's breezy reach,

“O'er Furu's strand and Tako's isle,
Where myriad seagulls play,
She's been a hunting all the while :
I saw her yesterday.

* For the use of the mirror and of linen or paper symbols in making supplication to the gods see the notes to pp. 51 and 75.

"Two days at least must come and go
Before she homeward flies;
Sev'n days at most,—it must be so,—
Will show her to thine eyes.

"So let thy tears no longer stream,
No more for 'Blackie' sigh!"
So spake the maiden in my dream,
Then vanish'd to the sky.

(YAKAMOCHI.)

[In the year 749 there had been no rain since the sixth day of the intercalary fifth moon,* and the peasants' fields and gardens seemed on the point of drying up. On the first day of the sixth moon there suddenly appeared a rain-cloud, which gave occasion to the following verses.]

From ev'ry quarter of the vast domains,—
Earth's whole expanse,—o'er which the sov'reign
reigns,
Far as the clank of horses' hoofs resounds,
Far as the junks seek ocean's utmost bounds,
Ten thousand off'rings, as in days of yore,
Still to this day their varied treasures pour
Into th' imperial coffers:—but of all
The bearded rice is chief and principal.
But now, alas! the fields are till'd in vain;

* According to the old Japanese calendar, which was modelled on that of China, an intercalary month had to be inserted three times in every eight years to make up for the reckoning of the year as containing only 360 days. °

Day follows day, and still no show'r of rain ;
 Morn after morn each thirsty blade droops down,
 And ev'ry garden tint is chang'd to brown ;
 While I, heart-stricken, on the prospect gaze,
 And, as the infant that his hands doth raise
 To clutch his mother's breast, so to the heav'n
 I lift mine eyes to pray that rain be giv'n.

Oh ! may the cloud whose fleecy form is seen
 To rest yon distant mountain-peaks between,
 Wafted across to where the ocean-god
 Makes in the foaming waves his dread abode,
 Meet with the vapours of the wat'ry plain,
 Then here returning, fall as grateful rain !

(YAKAMOCHI.)

Lament on the Mutability of all Earthly Things.

Since the far natal hour of earth and heaven,
 Men never cease to cry
 That ne'er to aught in this our world 'twas given
 To last eternally.

If upward gazing on the moon of light
 That hangs in heav'n's high plain,
 I see her wax, 'twill not be many a night
 Before that moon shall wane.

And if in Spring each twig puts forth his flow'r
 On all the hills around,
 Dew-chill'd and storm-swept in dull Autumn's hour
 The leaves fall to the ground,

Such, too, is man : soon pales the ruddy cheek,
 The raven locks soon fade ;
 And the fresh smile of morn 'twere vain to seek
 Amid the evening shade.

And I that gaze upon the mortal scene,
 My tears flow down for ever,
 Where all is viewless as the wind unseen,
 And fleeting as the river.

(YAKAMOCHI.)

The Cuckoo.

(MAY, A.D. 750.)

Near to the valley stands my humble cot,
 The village nestles 'neath the cooling shade
 Of lofty timber ; but the silent glade
 Not yet re-echoes with the cuckoo's note.

The morning hour e'er finds me, sweetest bird !
 Before my gate ; and, when the day doth pale,
 I cast a wistful glance adown the vale ;—
 But e'en one note, alas ! not yet is heard.

(HIRONAWA.)

Lines

SENT BY A MOTHER TO HER DAUGHTER. (JULY, A.D. 750.)

[The mother was Sakanouye, and lived at the court of Nara. Her daughter, who was married to the poet

Yakamochi, had accompanied her husband to his governorship of the distant province of Koshi.*]

Thou wast my child, and to my heart more dear
Than to the sov'reign monarch of the deep
All the rich jewels that in casket rare
Beneath the billows he is said to keep.
But it was just that thy bold spouse should bear
Thee in his train t'ward Koshi's deserts wild.
Thou bad'st adieu ; and since that hour, sweet child,
In ceaseless visions of remembrance clear
There seems to float the face for which I yearn,
The brows oblique as ocean's crested wave.
But I am old, and scarce love's pow'r to save
May stretch my life to welcome thy return.

(SAKANOUYE.)

* The Japanese commentators do not notice the discrepancy between the statement of this poem that Yakamochi *had taken his wife with him* to his far northern governorship, and those of his own verses written from the north to the *wife whom he had left at Nara*, and lamenting his solitary state (see the songs on pp. 40 and 42, besides many others in the "*Manyōshū*") The simplest explanation probably is that the poet had two wives (though Sakanouye's daughter was doubtless the legitimate one), and that, in writing of his solitariness to his Nara wife, he made use of a poetical license as common among the ancient Japanese as the relations between the sexes were loose.

PART II.

SHORT POEMS

FROM THE

“K O K I N S H Ū”

OR,

“*COLLECTION OF ODES, ANCIENT AND
MODERN.*”

SHORT POEMS.

1.

(*Spring*, i. 4.*)

Spring, spring, has come, while yet the landscape bears
Its fleecy burden of unmelted snow !
Now may the zephyr gently 'gin to blow,
To melt the nightingale's sweet frozen tears,

(*Anon.*)

2.

(*Spring*, i. 6.)

Amid the branches of the silv'ry bowers
The nightingale doth sing : perchance he knows
That spring hath come, and takes the later snows
For the white petals of the plum's sweet flowers.†

(*SOSEI.*)

* The "*Kokinshū*" poems are, in the original, arranged in several categories,—Spring, Summer, Love, &c., many of which are themselves subdivided. Thus *Spring*, i. 4, signifies the fourth ode in the first subdivision of Spring, and so on of the rest.

* The plum-tree, cherry-tree, &c., are in Japan cultivated not for their fruit, but for their blossoms. Together with the wistaria, the lotus, the iris, the lespedeza, and a few others, these take the place which is occupied in the West by the rose, the lily, the violet, &c. Though flowers are perpetually referred to and immensely admired, there has never been in Japan any "language of flowers."

3.

(Spring, i. 23.)

Too lightly woven must the garments be,—
Garments of mist,—that clothe the coming spring :
In wild disorder see them fluttering
Soon as the zephyr breathes adown the lea.

(YUKIHIRA.)

4.

(Spring, i. 31.)

Heedless that now the mists of spring do rise,
Why fly the wild-geese northward ?—Can it be
Their native home is fairer to their eyes,
Though no sweet flowers blossom on its lea ?

(ISE.)

5.

(Spring, i. 55.)

If earth but ceas'd to offer to my sight
The beauteous cherry-trees when blossoming,
Ah ! then indeed, with peaceful, pure delight,
My heart might revel in the joys of spring ! *

(NARAHIRA.)

6.

(Spring, ii. 8.)

Tell me, doth any know the dark recess
Where dwell the winds that scatter the spring flow'rs ?

* *I.e.*, "The cherry-blossoms are ineffably lovely; but my joy in gazing at them is marred by the knowledge that they must so soon pass away."

Hide it not from me ! By the heav'nly pow'rs,
I'll search them out to upbraid their wickedness !

(Sosei.)

7.

(*Spring*, ii. 20.)

No man so callous but he heaves a sigh
When o'er his head the wither'd cherry-flow'rs
Come flutt'ring down.—Who knows ? the spring's soft
show'rs
May be but tears shed by the sorrowing sky.

(KURONUSHI.)

8.

(*Spring*, ii. 41.)

Whom would your cries, with artful calumny,
Accuse of scatt'ring the pale cherry-flow'rs ?
'Tis your own pinions flitting through these bow'rs
That raise the gust which makes them fall and die !

(Sosei.)

9.

(*Summer*, 1.)

In blossoms the wistaria-tree to-day
Breaks forth, that sweep the wavelets of my lake :
When will the mountain-cuckoo come and make
The garden vocal with his first sweet lay ?*

(*Attributed to* HITOMARO.)

* The wistaria among flowers, and among birds the cuckoo, are the poetical representatives of early summer, as are the plum-blossom and the nightingale of early spring.

10.

(Summer, 31.)

Oh, lotus-leaf! I dreamt that the wide earth
 Held nought more pure than thee,—held nought more
 true :

Why, then, when on thee rolls a drop of dew,
 Pretend that 'tis a gem of priceless worth?*

(HENJO.)

11.

(Autumn, i. 4.)

Can I be dreaming? 'Twas but yesterday
 We planted out each tender shoot again ;†
 And now the autumn breeze sighs o'er the plain,
 Where fields of yellow rice confess its sway.

(Anon.)

12.

(Autumn, i. 25.)

A thousand thoughts of tender vague regret
 Crowd on my soul, what time I stand and gaze
 On the soft-shining autumn moon ;—and yet
 Not to me only speaks her silv'ry haze.

(CHISATO.)

* The lotus is the Buddhist emblem of purity, and the lotus growing out of the mud is a frequent metaphor for the heart that remains unsullied by contact with the world.

† The transplanting of the rice occupies the whole rural population during the month of June, when men and women may all be seen working in the fields knee-deep in water. The crops are gathered in October.

13.

(Autumn, i. 44.)

What bark impell'd by autumn's fresh'ning gale
Comes speeding t'ward me?—'Tis the wild-geese driv'n
Across the fathomless expanse of Heav'n,
And lifting up their voices for a sail!

(Anon.)

14.

(Autumn, i. 58.)

The silv'ry dewdrops that in autumn light
Upon the moors must surely jewels be;
For there they hang all over hill and lea,
Strung on the threads the spiders weave so tight.

(ASAYASU.)

15.

(Autumn, ii. 2.)

The trees and herbage, as the year doth wane,
For gold and russet leave their former hue,—
All but the wave-toss'd flow'rets of the main,
That never yet chill autumn's empire knew.

(YASUHIDE.)

16.

(Autumn, ii. 9.)

The dews are all of one pale silv'ry white:
Then tell me, if thou canst, oh! tell me why

These silv'ry dews so marvellously dye
The autumn leaves a myriad colours bright ?

(TOSHIYUKI.)

17.

Autumn, ii. 44)

The warp is hoar-frost and the woof is dew,—
Too frail, alas ! the warp and woof to be :
For scarce the woods their damask robes endue,
When, torn and soil'd, they flutter o'er the lea.

(SEKIWO.)

18.

(Autumn, ii. 47.)

E'en when on Earth the thund'ring gods held sway
Was such a sight beheld ?—Calm Tatsta's * flood,
Stain'd, as by Chinese art, with hues of blood,
Rolls o'er Yamáto's peaceful fields away.

(NARIHIRA.)

19.

(Winter, 10.)

When falls the snow, lo ! ev'ry herb and tree,
That in seclusion through the wintry hours
Long time had been held fast, breaks forth in flow'rs
That ne'er in spring were known upon the lea.

(TSURAYUKI.)

* Properly written Tatsuta. The allusion here is to the crimson and scarlet of the autumn maple-trees, which may well form a constantly recurring theme for the raptures of the Japanese poets, who in the fall of every year see around them a halo of glory such as our dull European forests do not even distantly approach.

20.

(Winter, 17.)

When from the skies, that wintry gloom enshrouds,
 The blossoms fall and flutter round my head,
 Methinks the spring e'en now his light must shed
 O'er heavenly lands that lie beyond the clouds.

(FUKAYABU.)

21.

(Congratulations, 1.)

A thousand years of happy life be thine !
 Live on, my lord, till what are pebbles now,
 By age united, to great rocks shall grow,
 Whose venerable sides the moss doth line ! *

(Anon.)

22.

(Congratulations, 9.)

[Ode composed on beholding a screen presented to the Empress by Prince Sadayasu † at the festival held in honour of her fiftieth birthday, whereon was painted a man seated beneath the falling cherry-blossoms and watching them flutter down.]

Of all the days and months that hurry by
 Nor leave a trace, how long the weary tale !

* The writer of this ode and the person addressed are alike unknown. As it heads the section entitled "Congratulations," the addressee may not improbably have been a Mikado. In any case, it was selected in 1880 to serve as the "national anthem," in imitation of European precedents. It is known as "*Kimi ga yo*," from the opening words of the original.

† The Empress intended is the one famous in Japanese literature under the designation of Nijō-no-Kisaki, consort of the Emperor Seiwa and mother of Prince Sadayasu. It was in A.D. 891 that the festival in question was held. "

And yet how few the springs when in the vale
On the dear flow'rets I may feast mine eye ! *

(OKIKAZE.)

23.

(*Congratulations*, 11.)

If ever mortal in the days of yore
By Heav'n a thousand years of life was lent,
I wot not ; but if never seen before,
Be thou the man to make the precedent !

(SOSEI.)

24.

(*Parting*, 39.)

Mine oft-reiterated pray'rs in vain
The parting guest would stay : Oh, cherry-flow'rs !
Pour down your petals, that from out these bow'rs
He ne'er may find the homeward path again !

(*Anon.*)

25.

(*Travelling*, 4.)

With roseate hues that pierce th' autumnal haze
The spreading dawn lights up Akashi's shore ;

* In rendering this stanza the translator has followed, not the original "*Kokinshū*" text, but the better known reading of the "*Rō-eishū*" ("Collection of Bright Songs"), a compilation made early in the eleventh century as a wedding present for his son-in-law Michinori (afterwards regent of the empire) by the Minister Kintō.

But the fair ship, alas ! is seen no more :—
An island veils it from my loving gaze.

(*Attributed to HITOMARO,*)

But more probably by some court lady who thus expresses her grief at the sight of the departure of the vessel bearing her love from her side. Akashi is a beautiful spot on the shores of the Inland Sea.

26.

(*Travelling, 6.*)

[The high-born poet Narihira, who had been banished from the court on account of an intrigue with the Empress, was either compelled, or himself chose,—we know not which,—to hide his disgrace in a temporary absence from the capital, and made to what were then the wild and almost undiscovered districts of Eastern Japan, a journey whose every step has been rendered classic in the national literature through the pages of the "*Ise Mono-gatari*," a historical romance which details in perfect literary style Narihira's amorous and other adventures, and strings together on a thread of narrative the various odes that he composed. "He had now," says the original, "reached the banks of the river Sumida,* which floweth between the lands of Musashi and Shimōsa, and had dismounted and sat him down awhile with his heart full of loving remembrances of Miyako, gazing steadfastly before him, and thinking of the immeasurable distance that he had travelled. Nor was there any in the whole company whose thoughts went not back to Miyako, as the ferryman bade them hasten on board for that the daylight had waned; and so they stepped into the boat. And as thus they grieved, they saw a white fowl sporting on the bank of the river,—white, with red legs and a red bill; and it was a fowl never beheld in

* On the spot where, seven and a half centuries later, rose the great city of Yedo, now renamed Tōkyō.

Miyako, so none of all the company did know it. So when they inquired of the ferryman its name, and Narihira heard him make answer, 'This is the Miyako-bird,' he composed this verse :]

Miyako-bird ! if not in vain men give
Thy pleasing name, my question deign to hear :—
And has she pass'd away, my darling dear,
Or doth she still for Narihira live ?

(NARIHIRA.)

27.

(*Acrostics*, 8.*)

Since that I talk'd with thee, my brooding heart
Is sadder far than when I was less blest :—
The prescient thought will never let me rest
Of the swift-coming hour when we must part.

(FUKAYABU.)

28.

(*Love*, i. 44.)

The barest ledge of rock, if but a seed
Alight upon it, lets the pine-tree grow :—
If, then, thy love for me be love indeed,
We'll come together, dear ; it must be so !

(*Anon.*)

* In the English version of this stanza the general sense alone has been preserved. The play in the original is on *Kara-momo-no-hana*, the name of a flower, which is embedded in the text after the fashion of the popular game of "Buried Cities," thus :—

AU KARA MO
MONO HA NAHO koso
Kanashikere,
Wakaren koto wo
Kanete omoeba.

29.

(Love, i, 54.)

There is on earth a thing more bootless still
 Than to write figures on a running stream :
 And that thing is (believe me if you will)
 To dream of one who ne'er of you doth dream.

(Anon.)

30.

*(Love, i. 66.)**

Now hid from sight are great Mount Fusi's fires.
 Mount Fusi, said I?—'Tis myself I mean ;
 For the word *Fusi* signifies, I ween,
Few see the constant flame of my desires.

(Anon.)

31.

(Love, ii. 2.)

Since that first night when, bath'd in hopeless tears,
 I sank asleep, and he I love did seem
 To visit me, I welcome ev'ry dream,
 Sure that they come as heav'n-sent messengers.

(KOMACHI.)

32.

(Love, ii. 9.)

Methinks my tenderness the grass must be,
 Clothing some mountain desolate and lone ;

* This stanza is, by the necessity of the case, a mere free imitation of the punning original,

For though it daily grows luxuriantly,
To ev'ry mortal eye 'tis still unknown.

(YOSHIKI.)

33.

(*Love*, ii. 23.)

Upon the causeway through the land of dreams
Surely the dews must plentifully light ;
For when I've wander'd up and down all night,
My sleeve's so wet that nought will dry its streams.

(TSURAYUKI.)

34.

(*Love*, ii. 43.)

Fast fall the silv'ry dews, albeit not yet
'Tis autumn weather ; for each drop's a tear,
Shed till the pillow of my hand is wet,
As I awake from dreaming of my dear.

(*Anon.*)

35.

(*Love*, v. 56.)

I ask'd my soul where springs th' ill-omened seed
That bears the herb of dull forgetfulness ; *
And answer straightway came : Th' accurs'd weed
Grows in that heart which knows no tenderness.

(SOSER.)

* The "Herb of Forgetfulness" (*wasure-gusa*) answers in the poetical diction of the Japanese to the classical "waters of Lethe."

36.

*(Elegies, 10.)**

So frail our life. perchance to-morrow's sun
May never rise for me. Ah! well-a-day!
Till comes the twilight of the sad to-day,
I'll mourn for thee, O thou belovèd one!

(TSURAYUKI.)

37.

(Elegies, 23.)

The perfume is the same, the same the hue
As that which erst my senses did delight:
But he who planted the fair avenue
Is here no more, alas! to please my sight!

(TSURAYUKI.)

38.

(Elegies, 31.)

One thing, alas! more fleeting have I seen
Than wither'd leaves driv'n by the autumn gust:
Yea, evanescent as the whirling dust
Is man's brief passage o'er this mortal scene!

(CHISATO.)

* It is the young poet Ki-no-Tomonori who is mourned in this stanza. He was nephew to Tsurayuki, and, after holding several high posts at court, had been appointed to assist his uncle in the compilation of the "Odes Ancient and Modern." He died in A.D. 905, a few months before the completion of the work.

39.

(Miscellaneous, i. 1.)

Softly the dew's upon my forehead light :
From off the oars, perchance, as feather'd spray,
They drop, while some fair skiff bends on her way
Across the Heav'nly Stream * on starlit night.

(Anon.)

40.

(Miscellaneous, i. 24.)

What though the waters of that antique rill
~~That flows~~ along the heath no more are cold ;
Those who remember what it was of old
Go forth to draw them in their buckets still.

(Anon.)

41.

(Miscellaneous, i. 33.†)

Old Age is not a friend I wish to meet ;
And if some day to see me he should come,
I'd lock the door as he walk'd up the street,
And cry, "Most honour'd sir ! I'm not at home !"

(Anon.)

* The Milky Way.

† This stanza is remarkable for being an instance, rare in Japanese literature, of that direct impersonation of an abstract idea which is so strongly marked a characteristic of Western thoughts and modes of expression.

42.

*(Miscellaneous, i. 41.)**

Yes, I am old ; but yet with doleful stour
I will not choose to rail 'gainst Fate's decree.
An I had not grown old, then ne'er for me
Had dawn'd the day that brings this golden hour.

(TOSHIYUKI.)

43.

(Miscellaneous, i. 61.†)

The roaring torrent scatters far and near
Its silv'ry drops :—Oh ! let me pick them up !
For when of grief I drain some day the cup,
Each will do service as a bitter tear.

(YUKIHIRA.)

44.

(Miscellaneous, i. 64.)

[Composed on beholding the cascade of Otowa on
Mount Hiye.]

Long years, methinks, of sorrow and of care
Must have pass'd over the old fountain-head
Of the cascade ; for like a silv'ry thread
It rolls adown, nor shows one jet black hair.

(TADAMINE.)

45.

(Miscellaneous, ii. 24.)

If e'en that grot where thou didst seek release
From worldly strife in lonesome mountain glen

* Composed on the occasion of a feast at the palace.

† One of a number of stanzas composed by a party of courtiers
who visited the cascade of Nunobiki, near the site of the modern
port of Kōbe.

Should find thee sometimes sorrowful, ah ! then
Where mayst thou farther flee to search for peace ?

(MITSUNE.)

46.

(*Conceits*, 11.)

[Stanza composed and sent to the owner of the neighbouring house on the last day of winter, when the wind had blown some snow across from it into the poet's dwelling.]

So close thy friendly roof, so near the spring,
That though not yet dull winter hath gone hence,
The wind that bloweth o'er our parting fence
From thee to me the first gay flow'rs doth bring,

(UKAYABU.)

47.

(*Conceits*, 21.)

If to this frame of mine in spring's first hour,
When o'er the moor the lightsome mists do curl,
Might but be lent the shape of some fair flower,
Haply thou'dst deign to pluck me, cruel girl !

(OKIKAZE.)

48.

(*Conceits*, 29.)

"Love me, sweet girl ! thy love is all I ask !"
"Love thee ?" she laughing cries ; "I love thee not !"
"Why, then, I'll cease to love thee on the spot,
Since loving thee is such a thankless task !"

(*Anon.*)

49.

(*Conceits*, 31.)

A youth once lov'd me, and his love I spurn'd.
But see the vengeance of the pow'rs above
On cold indiff'rence : now 'tis I that love,
And my fond love, alas ! is not return'd.

(*Anon.*)

50.

(*Conceits*, 48.)

Beneath love's heavy weight my falt'ring soul
Plods, like the packman, o'er life's dusty road.
Oh ! that some friendly hand would find ~~a pole~~
To ease my shoulders of their grievous load !

(*Anon.*)

PART III.

SELECTIONS

FROM THE

N Ō - N Ō - U T A I ;

OR,

"LYRIC DRAMAS."

1. THE DEATH STONE.
2. LIFE IS A DREAM.
3. NAKAMITSU.

The Death-Stone.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THE SPIRIT OF THE "FLAWLESS JEWEL MAIDEN."

THE BUDDHIST PRIEST GENNŌ.

THE CHORUS.

SCENE.—The moor of Nasu, in the province of Shimotsuke,
some ninety miles to the north of Tokyo.

Priest. What though the vapours of the fleeting scene
Obscure the view of pilgrims here below?
With heart intent on heav'nly things unseen,
I take my journey through this world of woe.*

I am a priest, and Gennō is my name. Ever fixed in the seat of contemplation, I had long groaned over my imperfection in that which of all things is the most essential.† But now I see clear, and, waving in my hand the sacerdotal besom, go forth to gaze upon the world. After sojourning in the province of Michinoku, I would now fain go up to the capital, and there pass the winter season of meditation. I have crossed the river Shirakawa, and have arrived at the moor of Nasu in the province of Shimotsuke.

* The original of this stanza and of the next is extremely obscure, and the English translation is therefore merely tentative.

† Viz., spiritual insight.

Alas ! the vapours of the fleeting scene
Obscure the view of pilgrims here below ;
Strike out the hope in heav'nly things unseen,
What guide were left us through this world of woe ?

Spirit. Ah ! rest not under the shadow of that stone !

Priest. What then ? Is there any reason for not resting under the shadow of this stone ?

Spirit. Yes ; this is the Death-Stone of the moor of Nasu ; and not men only, but birds even and beasts perish if they but touch it.

Seek not to die ! What ! hast thou not heard tell
Of Nasu's Death-Stone and its fatal spell ?

I entreat thee draw not nigh unto it !

Priest. What is it, then, that maketh this stone so murderous ?

Spirit. 'Tis that into it, in the olden time, entered the spirit of her who was called the "Flawless Jewel Maiden," concubine to the Emperor Toba.

Priest. Into this stone ? on this far-distant road ?
Methought the palace was the girl's abode.

Spirit. Verily it cannot be without reason that the story hath been handed down from the olden time.

Priest. Thine appearance and thy language seem to assure me that the tale is not unknown to thee.

Spirit. No ! no ! I know it but in outline. Fleeting as the dew is the memory of the maiden's fate.

Spirit. Erst through the king's abode
Priest. Proudly the maiden strode,
Spirit. Now on this des'late road
Priest. Her ghost doth dwell,
Spirit. Broods o'er the fated land,
Priest. And ev'ry pilgrim band
Spirit. Falls 'neath her murd'rous hand,
Priest. Wielding the spell !

I.

Chorus. The Death-Stone stands on Nasu's moor
 Through winter snows and summer heat ;
 The moss grows grey upon its sides,
 But the foul demon haunts it yet.

Chill blows the blast : the owl's sad choir
 Hoots hoarsely through the moaning pines ;
 Among the low chrysanthemums
 The skulking fox, the jackal whines,
 As o'er the moor the autumn light declines.*

II.

Chorus. Fair was the girl,—beyond expression fair ;
 But what her country, who her parents were,
 None knew. And yet, as in her native place,
 She proudly dwelt above the Cloudy Space,†

* This stanza is an adaptation of part of an ode by the Chinese poet Peh Kū-yih.

† *I.e.*, in the Mikado's palace. The courtiers are called "the people above the clouds."

So sweetly deck'd by nature and by art,
The monarch's self soon clasp'd her to his heart.

Spirit. One day th' Imperial Majesty saw fit
To put to proof the Jewel Maiden's wit.

Chorus. Nor did she fail in ought : grave Buddhist lore,
Confucian classics of the days of yore,
Cipango's bards, the poets of Cathay,
And all the science the two realms display,—
She knew them all, nor did her answers fail
To tell of music all the wondrous tale.

Spirit. A mind so flawless in a form so fair
Deserv'd the name her lord then gave to her.

Chorus. Once the Mikado made a splendid feast
At the cool Summer Palace : ev'ry guest
That of accomplishments or wit could boast
Was bidden there,—a gay and brilliant host,
Like to the clouds, from out whose fleecy sphere
Th' imperial kindred, like the moon, shone clear.
But hark ! what rumour mingles with the strains
Of liveliest music ? See ! the heav'nly plains
Are wrapp'd in clouds and darkness ! Not
star,—
The moon not risen yet : but from afar,
Heralded by the rustling of the show'r,
The wind comes howling through the festive
bow'r ;
The lanterns are blown out : “ A light ! a light ! ”
Cry all the courtiers in tumultuous fright.

And lo ! from out the Jewel Maiden's frame
There's seen to dart a weirdly lustrous flame !
It grows, it spreads, it fills th' imperial halls ;
The painted screens, the costly pannell'd walls,
Erst the pale viewless damask of the night
Sparkling stand forth as in the moon's full light.

Spirit. From that same hour the sov'reign monarch
pin'd.

Chorus. From that same hour the sov'reign monarch
pin'd.

In dire disease, whose hidden cause to find
The court magician cast his curious spell,
And thus the fortune of the lots did tell :
" 'Tis none but she, great Emp'ror ! without doubt
That harlot is the culprit : cast her out !
Expel the fiend, who, with insidious art,
The state to ravage, captivates thy heart ! "
Thus spake the seer, and in an instant turn'd
The monarch's love to hate. The sorceress,
spurn'd,
Resumes her proper shape, and speeds away
To Nasu's moor, there dwelling to this day,

Priest. Thou that hast deigned to tell me this long
history, who may'st thou be ?

Spirit. Wherefore any longer conceal it ? The demon
that of old dwelt in the breast of the "Flawless Jewel
Maiden," and that now inhabits the Death-Stone of the
moor of Nasu is none other than myself.

Priest. Ah, well-a-day ! Strange is it, but true, that the soul sunk lowest in the depths of wickedness will rise highest on the pinnacle of virtue. I will bestow on thee the priestly robe and begging-bowl.* But, prithee, reveal thyself to mine eyes in thy proper shape.

Spirit. Alas ! what shame is now my portion !

In the garish light of day
I hide myself away,
Like pale Asama's † fires :
With the night I'll come again,
Confess my guilt with pain
And new-born pure desires.

Chorus. Dark will be the night ;
But her red lustrous light
Ne'er needs the moon.
" Wait ! fear not ! " she cries,
And from the hermit's eyes
Fades 'neath the stone.

[The Spirit vanishes.

Priest. 'Tis said of stocks and stones they have no soul. Yet what signifieth the text : " Herbs and trees, stones and rocks, shall all enter into Nirvâna," ‡ save that from the beginning a divine essence dwells within them ? How much more, then, if I bestow on this un-

* For a priest to bestow his own robe on a favourite disciple is a practice of which the founder of Buddhism himself is said to have set the example.

† An active volcano situated in the province of Shinano.

‡ A quotation from the "*Hokekyô*," or "Lotus of the Law."

happy creature the priestly robe and begging-bowl, must not her attainment of Nirvâna be placed beyond a doubt? Wherefore, with offerings of flowers and of burning incense, I recite the scriptures with my face turned toward the stone, crying :

Spirit of the Death-Stone, I conjure thee! what was it in a former world that did cause thee to assume in this so foul a shape?*

Tarry not! away! away!

From this very hour shalt thou through mine intercessions obtain Nirvâna,

From this very hour shall they gain for thee the virtues of a saint.

Hear me! hear me!

[The stone is rent asunder and the Demon issues from it.

Spirit. In stones there are spirits,
In the waters is a voice heard :
The winds sweep across the firmament !

Chorus. Oh, horror ! horror !
The Death-Stone's rent in twain,
And lo ! the Demon stands reveal'd !

Priest. Strange ! passing strange !
The Death-Stone's rent in twain :
O'er moor and field
A lurid glare

* See *infra* text and footnote p. 137.

Burns fierce. There stands reveal'd
 A fox,—and yet again
 The phantom seems to wear
 The aspect of a maiden fair ! *

Spirit. No more the mystery can be conceal'd.

I am she who first, in Ind, was the demon to whom
 Prince Hanzoku paid homage at the murderous mound,†
 In Great Cathay I took the form of Hōji, consort of the
 Emperor Iuwao; and at the court of the Rising Sun I
 became the “Flawless Jewel Maiden,” concubine to the
 Emperor Toba.

Intent on the destruction of the Imperial line, I
 assumed the shape of a fair maiden, whose presence caused
 the Jewel-body ‡ to languish in disease. Already was I
 gloating over the thought of the monarch's death, when the
 court magician, Abe-no-Yasunari, directed against me his
 powers of exorcism; he set up the many-coloured symbols §
 of the gods upon the altar, and gave them also into my
 hands :

[Here the Spirit commences a dance, which lasts till
 the end of the play.]

* It is to be understood that the “Jewel Maiden” had originally been a fox, and that the moor of Nasu was her native place. Innumerable are the stories of foxes and cats assuming human shape in order to carry out their diabolical designs, and to this day the belief in the reality of such occurrences has firm hold on the minds of the less educated classes of the community.

† The translator has not been able to ascertain the details of the story to which reference is here made. The proper Chinese names of the Emperor and his consort mentioned in the next sentence are Yeo Wang and Pao Sze, who lived in the eighth century B.C. Pao Sze ruined her Imperial master by her criminal luxury and folly.

‡ A phrase signifying the person of the Mikado.

§ See the note to p. 51.

Spirit. With fervent zeal the great magician prays :

Chorus. With fervent zeal the great magician prays,
And ev'ry tone with anguish and amaze
O'erpow'rs the witch, who with convulsive grasp
The holy symbols of the gods doth clasp,
And, heav'nward-soaring, flies o'er land and sea
To seek the shelter of this distant lea.

Spirit. Thereat the monarch issued his commands :

Chorus. Thereat the monarch issued his commands
To the two satraps of the neighb'ring lands : *
"Drive out," spake he, "the fiend of Nasu's
moor !"
And each true liege, to make his aim more sure,
For fivescore days on dogs his arrows tried,
For to the fox the dog is near allied : †
May we not thus trace back to that command
The custom of dog-shooting in our land ? ‡
Then the two satraps, arm'd with bow and
spear,
And myriad horsemen brought from far and near,

* Viz., of the department of Miura and of the province of Kazusa.

† In outward shape, not on account of the latter's possessing any of the supernatural power ascribed to the former.

‡ The sport of practising archery on dogs survived to the time of the revolution of 1868, and exhibitions of it (though rare) have been given since then, as on the occasion of the visit to Tōkyō of President Grant in 1879. It is not cruel, at least in its modern form, as the arrows are blunted. The dogs are brought into a closed arena, and the marksmen are mounted, the horses enjoying the excitement as much as their riders. The members of the princely house of Satsuma have always been specially noted for their skill in dog-shooting.

Beat all the moor, surround its ev'ry part,
Whose rage to 'scape avails no magic art ;
Swift fly the dogs, and swift the arrows fly
And, panting, stricken, I sink down and die.
But yet my ghost (though, like the morning dew
'Twas wrapt away from grosser human view)
Ceas'd not to haunt this distant des'late moor,
And from the Death-Stone wield its murd'rous
 pow'r,—
Till thou, great Buddha ! send'st thy priest this
 way
To bid religion reassert her sway.
"I swear, O man of God ! I swear," she cries,
"To thee whose blessing wafts me to the skies,
I swear a solemn oath, that shall endure
Firm as the Death-Stone standing on the moor,
~~That from this hour I'm virtue's child alone !~~"
Thus spake the ghoul, and vanished 'neath the
stone.*

* The good priest's blessing does *not* seem, however, to have been effectual ; for a poisonous stream still issues from the Death-Stone thrice every day.

Life is a Dream.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

THE PILGRIM ROSEI.
AN ENVOY.

A MINISTER.
THE CHORUS.

SCENE.—Inn at the village of Kantan in China.

TIME.—Early in the eighth century.

Rosei. Lost in this pathless world of woe,
Where nothing is, but only seems,
How may the weary pilgrim know
His waking moments from the dreams?

My name is Rosei, and I dwell in the land of Shoku.* Though born to mortal estate,† I have hitherto idled my life away without so much as seeking to tread the Buddhist path. But they tell me that on Mount Yōhi in the land of Ibara there dwells a learned and venerable priest; and to Mount Yōhi do

* Shoku and Ibara are the Japanese names of two feudal states in ancient China, whose proper Chinese appellations are respectively Shuh and Ch'u. Kantan, in like manner, should be Han-tan. This latter place, in the Japanese original, gives its name to the piece. But the expression "the pillow of Kantan" having become proverbial in the sense rendered by Calderon's famous title, the latter has been borrowed as both more euphonious and more expressive.

† A rare boon; for, according to Buddhist views, there are many more chances in favour of one's being born as a lower animal. He who obtains this inestimable privilege should show himself worthy of it by ardently following in the footsteps of the great reformer Shaka Muni.

I now turn my steps to search after the one great thing needful.

Behind the clouds, in distance veil'd,
The well-known landscape fades from sight,
While endless peaks my feet have scal'd
This many a weary day and night,

Chorus. On hill and moor the setting sun
Full oft has left him desolate ;
But half his course at length is run
What time he reaches Kantan's gate.

[He arrives at the village of Kantan.

Rosei. ~~What~~ What then? and is this the celebrated pillow
of which I have so often heard tell? Heaven must
surely have placed it in my way to bestow on me in a
dream a taste of that world whose portals I am about
to close for ever behind me.*

Chorus. 'Tis but a wayside inn to spend the hour
Of burning noon or wait the passing show'r ;
But he would fain through some strange dream be
led,
And on the magic pillow lays his head.

.

Enovy. How shall I venture to address thee? I have
a message for thee, Rosei.

* Not by death, by the renunciation of all earthly vanities,
which cannot but follow on my hearing the exposition of the law
by the hermit of Mount Yōhi. •

Rosei. Who, then, art thou?

Envoy. An ambassador sent by the Emperor of the land of Ibara to tell thee that 'tis his Imperial desire to relinquish the throne in thy favour.

Rosei. Incredible! and for what cause should I be thus raised to the supreme dignity?

Envoy. Far be it from me to scan the reasons. It must doubtless be because thou possessest the capacity worthily to rule the world. But tarry not, tarry not! Deign to enter the palanquin sent to bear thee to the capital.

Rosei. What may this strange message mean?
Sure th' imperial palanquin,
Strewn with gems of radiant hue
Sparkling like the evening dew,
For my limbs was ne'er design'd.

Chorus. Strange to leave the world behind!

Rosei. But perchance of highest heav'n
To scale the heights to me is giv'n.

Chorus. Onward the palanquin they bear
In jewell'd flow'ry radiance fair;
And he (unwitting that his pow'r
Forms but the dream of one short hour)
Outsoars the clouds * to find a throne
'Mid scenes of beauty past comparison.

* See note to the "Death-Stone," p. 111.

I.

Chorus. For ne'er in those old vasty halls Imperial,*
Bath'd in the moonbeams bright,
Or where the dragon soars on clouds ethereal,
Was ought like this to entrance the sight :
With golden sand and silvern pebbles white
Was strewn the floor ;
And at the corners four,
Through gates inlaid
With diamonds and jade,
Pass'd throngs whose vestments were of radiant
light,—
So fair a scene,
That mortal eye might ween
It scann'd the very heav'ns' unknown delight.†
Here countless gifts the folk came bearing,
Precious as myriad coins of finest gold ;
And there, the lesser with the greater sharing,
Advanc'd the vassals bold,
Their banners to display
That paint the sky with colours gay,
While rings the air as had the thunder roll'd.

Rosei. And in the east (to please the monarch's will),
Full thirty fathoms high,

* The references in this line and in the next line but one are to two famous ancient Chinese palaces.

† The particular heaven mentioned in the Japanese text is that entitled Kikenjō, or "the castle joyful to behold," the capital where Indra sits enthroned.

Chorus. There rose a silvern hill,
O'er which a golden sun hung in the sky.

Rosei. And on the western side,
O'er a gold mountain thirty fathoms high,

Chorus. A silver moon did ride ;—
So mote it seem as had the builder striven
To prove the poet's rhyme,*
Who sings that in th' abiding heaven
No spring and autumn mark the time,
And o'er that deathless gate
The sun and moon their wonted speed forget.

Minister. How shall I venture to address your Majesty ?

'Tis already fifty years since your Majesty deigned to ascend the throne ; but if you will be pleased to partake of this elixir, your Imperial life may be prolonged to a millennium. Therefore have I brought hither the nectar and the patera.

Rosei. What then may nectar be ?

Minister. 'Tis the drink of the immortals.

Rosei. And the patera ?

Minister. That likewise is their wine-cup.

[After the ensuing dialogue commences the dance, which lasts until Rosei wakes from his dream.

Rosei. A thousand years this potion gives,

* The already often-quoted Chinese poet Peh Kü-yih.

Minister. Ten thousand springs my lord outlives.

Rosei. I the glorious sceptre swaying,

Minister. Happy multitudes obeying,

Chorus. Ev'ry town and ev'ry cot
Blest for ever in its lot.

* * * *

II.

Chorus. Oh, lot immortal! rapture flow'ry fair!
Thou bear'st new blossoms still:
Each laughing guest of nectar quaffs his fill,
And bids the others share.

Rosei. Go circling round for e'er,

Chorus. Sweet cup, and on the stream securely ride!
But all too swiftly ebbs the flow'ry tide,
To stay whose burden yet the dancer yearning,—
His violet sleeve upturning,—
Waves to and fro like trembling beams of light,
While shines for e'er heav'n's silvern goblet
bright.*

* The original of these verses is an extreme instance of the obscurity, logical incoherence, and many-sided application characteristic of the style of the Japanese lyric dramas. The passage is intended to convey two distinct pictures to the mind: primarily, that of the wine-cup, whose nectar each guest would keep for himself, and regrets to see passing round and away from him. The stream of nectar, though in reality inside the cup, is thought of by the poet as outside of it, and therefore likened to a river, from a connection of ideas which leads him to allude to a festival held in the spring when goblets of wine are floated down streams on leaves and made the subject of verses. Secondly, there is a reference to the turning round i.e., the dancing; and the sleeve which is upturn-

Rosei. Haply the dews, an' they should light for ever.

Chorus. Filling the wine-cups of the flow'rs,
Might grow to be a mighty river :
But ah ! what joys more fix'd are ours !
Our nectar is a living spring
Whose flow'ry waters never shall run dry,
What though we quaff for aye
Their heav'nly dews, and dance and sing
All through the day and night,
Not parting day from night,
'Mid dazzling pomp and joys more ravishing
Than e'er before were shower'd on mortal sight.

Rosei. Oh, radiant spring-time of delight,

•

Chorus. That never more shall end !
'Tis from the moon that fairies erst did send
This dance ;* and therefore, rob'd in garments
white,
As borrow'd from a fleecy cloud,
He dances and he sings aloud,—
He sings all night for joy,
From night till morn do songs his voice employ :—
And now again 'tis surely even :

Rosei. No ; midday's shining here !

ed to enable Rosei to stretch out his hand to stay the goblet, is also the sleeve which he waves in the dance. The goblet in the sky is the moon.

* See the "Robe of Feathers," another lyric drama quoted *in extenso* in "Things Japanese," s.v. "Theatre."

Chorus. 'Tis midday lighting up the heaven :

Rosei. No ; 'tis the moonbeams sparkling clear !

Chorus. Scarce hath the spring-tide brought the
flowers,

Rosei. When scarlet leaves fall through the bowers ;

Chorus. And summer hardly 'gins to reign,

Rosei. Ere snow lines all the plain.

Chorus. Spring, summer, autumn, winter, all turn
round ;

No herbs so rare but strew the ground ;
In one short day no flow'r but charms his sense,
And all is sweet magnificence.

* * * *

III.

Chorus. So speed the hours, and now the time is o'er ;
His fifty years of splendour are no more : *
'Twas all a dream, whose ev'ry shadowy grace
Must in a moment vanish into space,
Nought, as he wakes, bequeathing in their stead
Save the fam'd pillow where he laid his head.

Rosei. Mine eyelids ope and the fair vision fades :

* This does not fit in with what was said on p. 123 as to Rosei's life being prolonged to a millennium ; but in a dream consistency can scarcely be expected.

Chorus. His eyelids ope, and all the grandeur fades :—
Astonied he sits up.

Rosei. But those sweet maids,

Chorus. In queenly garb, singing soft melodies ?

Rosei. 'Twas but the zephyr rustling through the trees.

Chorus. And those vast halls of royal wealth and
pride ?

Rosei. Nought but this inn where I did turn aside.

Chorus. Thy reign of fifty years ?

Rosei. One hour of dreams
While in the pot a mess of millet steams.*

Chorus. Strange ! passing strange !

Rosei. But he that ponders well

Chorus. Will find all life the self-same story tell,—
That, when death comes, a century of bliss
Fades like a dream ; that 'tis in nought but this
Must end the monarch's fifty years of state,
Age long drawn out, th' ambition to be great,
And all that brilliant, all that joyful seems,
For there is nought on earth but fading dreams.

* This phrase has become proverbial.

Rosei. Save Precious Triad ! † save a suppliant soul !

Chorus. Yea, Kantan's pillow leads him to the goal,
Through insight to renounce all earthly things.
Thrice-bless'd the dream which such salvation
brings !

LIFE IS A DREAM is what the pilgrim learns,
Nor asks for more, but straightway home returns.‡

† The Sanskrit *Triratna*. It consists of the Founder of Buddhism, the Law, and the Priesthood.

‡ He had penetrated straight to the core of Buddhist doctrine, and the lessons of the holy man of Mount Yōhi would be superfluous.

NAKAMITSU.

Nakamitsu.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

MITSUNAKA,* Lord of the Horse to the Emperor Murakami.

BIJŌ, son of Mitsunaka, and still a boy.

NAKAMITSU, retainer of Mitsunaka.

KŌJŪ, son of Nakamitsu, and foster-brother of Bijō.

ESHIN, Abbot of the great monastery on Mount Hiei, near
— Kyōto.

THE CHORUS.

SCENE.—The Temple of Chūzanji, and my Lord Mitsunaka's palace in Kyōto.

TIME.—Early in the tenth century.

* More often, following the Chinese pronunciation of the characters composing the word, called Manjū. The play in the original is thus entitled, but the translator has preferred to rename it after the real hero of the piece. Mitsunaka was great-grandson of the Emperor Seiwa (died A. D. 880), and ancestor of the celebrated Minamoto family, and thereby of Yoritomo, the founder of the Shogunate. He is mentioned in the Japanese military annals as the queller of various rebellions, and may be considered as one of the warriors who were most influential in founding the mediæval feudal system.

PART I.

Nakamitsu. I am Nakamitsu, a man of the Fujiwara clan, and retainer of Mitsunaka, Lord of Tada in the land of Settsu. Now you must know that my lord hath an only son, and him hath he sent to a certain monastery amid the mountains named Chūzanji, while I, too, have a son called Kōjū, who is gone as page to young my lord. But young my lord doth not condescend to apply his mind unto study, loving rather nothing so well as to spend from morn to night in quarrelling and disturbance. Wherefore, thinking doubtless to disinherit young my lord, my lord already this many a time, hath sent his messengers to the temple with summons to return home to Kyōto. Nevertheless as he cometh not, me hath he now sent on the same errand.

[The above words are supposed to be spoken during the journey, and Nakamitsu now arrives at the monastery.*

Prithee ! is any within ?

Kōjū. Who is it that deigneth to ask admittance ?

* The reader will call to mind what was said in the introductory note on the subject of the extreme simplicity which distinguishes the method of representing the Japanese lyric dramas. In accordance with this simplicity, all the changes of place mentioned in the text are indicated merely by a slight movement to and fro of the actors upon the stage.

Nakamitsu. What! is that Kōjū? Tell young my lord that I have come to fetch him home.

Kōjū. Your commands shall be obeyed.

[He goes to his youthful master's apartment.

How shall I dare to address my lord? *Nakamitsu* is come to fetch my lord.

Bijō. Call him hither.

Kōjū. Your commands shall be obeyed.

[He returns to the outer hall and addresses his father. Condescend to come this way.

[They go to *Bijō's* apartment.

Nakamitsu. It is long since I was last here.

Bijō. And what is it that hath now brought thee?

Nakamitsu. 'Tis that my lord your father hath sent me to bid your lordship follow me home without delay.

Bijō. Shall I, then, go without saying anything to the priests my preceptors?

Nakamitsu. Yes; if the priests be told, they will surely wish to see your lordship on the way, whereas my lord your father's commands were, that I alone was to escort you.

Bijō. Then we will away.

Nakamitsu. Kōjū! thou, too, shalt accompany thy master.

Kōjū. Your commands shall be obeyed.

[They depart from the temple, and arrive at *Mitsunaka's* palace.

Nakamitsu. How shall I dare to address my lord? I have brought hither his lordship *Bijō*.

Mitsunaka. Well, *Bijō*! nny only reason for sending

thee up to the monastery was to help thy learning ; and I would fain begin, by hearing thee read aloud from the Scriptures.*

Mitsunaka. And with these words, and bidding him
read on,
He lays on ebon desk before his son
The sacred text in golden letters writ.

Bijō. But how may he who never bent his wit
To make the pencil trace Asáka's line †
Spell out one letter of the book divine?
In vain, in vain his sire's behest he hears :
Nought may he do but choke with idle tears.

Mitsunaka. Ah ! surely 'tis that, being my child, he respecteth the Scriptures too deeply, and chooseth not to read them except for purposes of devotion. What of verse-making, then ?

Bijō. I cannot make any.

Mitsunaka. And music ?

[*Bijō* makes no answer.

Mitsunaka. What ! no reply ? Hast lost thy tongue, young fool ?

* *I.e.*, the Buddhist Scriptures. The particular book intended is the "*Hoke-kyō*," or "Lotus of the Law," the standard doctrinal work of most of the Buddhists of Japan. The reader of any modern descriptions of Japan need scarcely be told that it was only during the dark and Middle Ages that Japanese education followed this religious direction. For the last two or three hundred years the secular classics of China have had the entire forming of the national mind.

† It is said that in antiquity an ode commencing with the name of Mount Asaka was the first copybook put into hands of children. The term is therefore now used as the "Pillow-word" for learning to write.

Chorus. Whom, then, to profit wentest thou to school?
 And can it be that e'en a father's word,
 Like snow that falling melts, is scarcely heard,
 But 'tis unheeded? Ah! 'twill drive me wild
 To point thee out to strangers as my child!
 No sooner said, than out the scabbard flies
 His trusty sword, and with fierce flashing eyes
 Forward he darts; but, rushing in between,
 Good Nakamitsu checks the bloody scene,—
 Firm though respectful, stays his master's arm,
 And saves the lad from perilous alarm.

Nakamitsu. Good my lord, deign to be merciful this once!

Mitsunaka. Why stayedst thou my hand? Haste thou now and slay Bijō with this my sword.

Nakamitsu. Your commands shall be obeyed.

[He retires into another apartment.

What is this horror unutterable? 'Tis no mere passing fit of anger. What shall I do?—Ah! I have it! I have it! I will take upon myself to contrive some plan for his escape. Kōjū, Kōjū, art thou there?

Kōjū. Behold me at thy service.

Nakamitsu. Where is my lord Bijō?

Kōjū. All my prayers have been unavailing to make him leave this spot.

Nakamitsu. But why will he not seek refuge somewhere? Here am I come from my lord his father as a messenger of death!

[Bijō shows himself.

Bijō. That I am alive here at this moment is thy doing. But through the lattice I heard my father's words to thee just now.

Bijō. Little imports it an' I die or live,
But 'tis for thee I cannot choose but grieve
If thou do vex thy lord : to avert his ire
Strike off my head, and show it to my sire !

Nakamitsu. My lord, deign to be calm ! I will take upon myself to contrive some plan for your escape.—What ! say you a messenger hath come ? My heart sinks within me.—What ! another messenger ?

[These are messengers from Mitsunaka to ask whether his orders be not yet carried into execution.

Nakamitsu. Alas ! each joy, each grief we see unfurl'd
Rewards some action in a former world.

Kōjū. In ages past thou sinnedst ;

Bijō. And to-day

Chorus. Comes retribution : think not then to say
'Tis others' fault, nor foolishly upbraid
The lot thyself for thine own self hast made,
Say not the world's askew ! with idle prate
Of never-ending grief the hour grows late.
Strike off my head ! with many a tear he cries,
And might, in sooth, draw tears from any eyes.*

* The doctrine of retribution set forth in the above lines is a cardinal point of the Buddhist teaching ; and, as the afflicted Christian seeks support in the expectation of future rewards for goodness, so will the pious Buddhist find motives for resignation in the consideration of his present sufferings as the consequence of sins

Nakamitsu. Ah! young my lord, were I but of like age with thee, how readily would I not redeem thy life at the cost of mine own! Alas! that so easy a sacrifice should not be possible!

Kōjū. Father, I would make bold to speak a word unto thee.

Nakamitsu. What may it be?

Kōjū. 'Tis, father, that the words thou hast just spoken have found a lodgement in mine ears. Thy charge, truly, is Mitsunaka; but Mitsunaka's son is mine. This, if any, is a great occasion, and my years point to me as of right the chief actor in it. Be quick! be quick! strike off my head, and show it to Mitsunaka as the head of my lord Bijō!*

Nakamitsu. Thou'st spoken truly, Nakamitsu cries,
And the long sword from out his scabbard flies,
What time he strides behind his boy.

Bijō. But no!
The youthful lord on such stupendous woe

committed in past stages of existence. One of their Scriptures says: "If thou wouldst know the causes in the past life, look at the effects in the present: if thou wouldst know the effects in the future life, look at the causes in the present." In such words we seem to see foreshadowed some of the most modern of philosophical doctrines.

* A little further on, *Kōjū* says it is a "rule" that a retainer must lay down his life for his lord. Though it would be difficult to find either in the Buddhist or in the Confucian teaching any explicit statement of such a duty, it is nevertheless true that the almost frantic loyalty of the mediæval and modern Japanese was but the natural result of such teaching domiciled amid a feudal society. We may see in this drama the whole distance that had been traversed by the Japanese mind since the time of the "*Manyōshū*" poets, whose views of life and duty were so much simpler and more joyous.

May never gaze unmov'd ; with bitter wail
The father's sleeve he clasps. Nought may't avail,
He weeping cries, e'en should the deed be done,
For I will slay myself if falls thy son,

Kōjū. But 'tis the rule,—a rule of good renown,—
That for his lord a warrior must lay down
His lesser life.

Bijō But e'en if lesser, yet
He, too, is human ; neither shouldst forget
What shame will e'er be mine if I survive.

Nakamitsu. Alas ! alas ! and 'tis for death they
strive !

Kōjū. Me deign to hear.

Bijō No ! mine the truer word !

Nakamitsu. Ah ! this my child !

Kōjū And there behold thy lord !

Nakamitsu. Betwixt the two see Nakamitsu stand :

Chorus. His own brave life, an' 'twere his lord's
command,
Were freely giv'n ; but now, in sore dismay,
E'en his fierce courage fades and droops away.

Bijō. Why heed a life my sire himself holds cheap ?

Nought may thy pity do but sink more deep
My soul in wretchedness.

Kōjū Mistake me not !
Think not 'tis pity moves me ; but a blot
The martial honour of our house will stain,
If, when I might have bled, my lord be slain.

Chorus. On either side 'tis infancy that pleads.

Nakamitsu. And yet how well they've learnt where
duty leads !

Chorus. Dear is thy lord !

Nakamitsu. And mine own child how dear !

Chorus. But Nakamitsu knows full well that ne'er,
To save the child his craven heart ador'd,
Warrior yet dar'd lay hands upon his lord.
He to the left, the trembling father cries,
Was sure my boy, nor lifts his tear-stain'd eyes :
A flash, a moment, the fell sabre gleams,
And sends his infant to the land of dreams.*

Nakamitsu. Oh, horror unutterable ! to think that I
should have slain mine own innocent child ! But I must
go and inform my lord.

[He goes to Mitsunaka's apartment.]

* Lit. " turns his child into a dream."

How shall I dare to address my lord? I have slain my lord Bijō according to your commands.

Mitsunaka. So thou hast killed the fellow? I trow his last moments were those of a coward. Is it not true?

* *Nakamitsu.* Not so, my lord. As I stood there aghast, holding in my hand the sword your lordship gave me, your son called out, "Why doth Nakamitsu thus delay?" and those were the last words he was pleased to utter.

Mitsunaka. As thou well knowest, Bijō was mine only child. Go and call thy son Kōjū, and I will adopt him as mine heir.

Nakamitsu. Kōjū, my lord, in despair at being separated from young my lord, hath cut off his locks,* and vanished none knows whither.

Nakamitsu. I, too, thy gracious license would obtain
Hence to depart, and in some holy fane
To join the priesthood.†

Mitsunaka. Harsh was my decree,
Yet can I think what thy heart's grief must be
That as its own my recreant child receiv'd,
And now of both its children is bereav'd.
But 'tis a rule of universal sway
That a retainer ever must obey.

* During the Middle Ages it was very usual for afflicted persons to renounce secular life, the Buddhist tonsure being the outward sign of the step thus taken.

† The dramatist omits to tell us that, as we gather from the sequel, this request was not granted.

Chorus. Thus would his lord, with many a suasion fond,
 Have rais'd poor Nakamitsu from despond.
 Nor eke himself, with heart all stony hard,
 Mote, as a father, ev'ry pang discard :
 Behold him now, oh ! lamentable sight !
 O'er his own son perform the fun'ral rite.

* * * *

II.

[Some time is supposed to have elapsed, and Eshin, abbot of the monastery on Mount Hiyei, comes down from that retreat to Mitsunaka's palace in the capital, bringing with him Bijō, who had been persuaded by Nakamitsu to take refuge with the holy man.]

Eshin. I am the priest Eshin, and am hastening on my way to my lord Mitsunaka's palace, whither certain motives guide me.

[They arrive at the gate, and he cries out :
 I would fain crave admittance.

Nakamitsu. Who is it that asks to be admitted?
 Ah ! 'tis his reverence Eshin.

Eshin. Alas for poor Kōjū !

Nakamitsu. Yes ; but prithee speak not of this before his lordship.

Eshin. I understand. Pray tell my lord that I am come.

Nakamitsu. Wait here, I pray thee, while I go and inform his lordship.

[He goes to Mitsunaka's apartment.

How shall I venture to address my lord ? His reverence Eshin hath arrived from Mount Hiyei.

Mitsunaka. Call him hither.

Nakamitsu. Your commands shall be obeyed.

[He goes to the room where Eshin is waiting, and says :
Be pleased to pass this way.

[They enter Mitsunaka's apartment.

Mitsunaka. What may it be that has brought your reverence here to-day ?

Eshin. 'Tis this, and this only. I come desiring to speak to your lordship anent my lord Bijō.

Mitsunaka. Respecting him I gave orders to Nakamitsu, which orders have been carried out.

Eshin. Ah ! my lord, 'tis that, 'tis that I would discourse of. Be not agitated, but graciously deign to give me thine attention while I speak. Thou didst indeed command that my lord Bijō's head should be struck off. But never might Nakamitsu prevail upon himself to lay hands on one to whom, as his lord, he knew himself bound in reverence through all the changing scenes of the Three Worlds.* Wherefore he slew his own son, Kōjū, to save my lord Bijō's life. And now here I come bringing Bijō with me, and would humbly supplicate thee to forgive one who was so loved that a man hath given his own son in exchange for him.†

Mitsunaka. Then he *was* a coward, as I thought !

* *I.e.*, the Past World, the Present World, and the World to Come. According to the Buddhist teaching, the relations subsisting between parents and children are for one life only ; those between husband and wife are for two lives ; while those uniting a servant to his lord or a disciple to his master endure for the space of three consecutive lives.

† This sentence, which so strangely reminds one of John iii. 16, is, like all the prose passages of these dramas, a literal rendering of the Japanese original.

Wherefore, if Kōjū was sacrificed, did he, too, not slay himself?

Eshin. My lord, put all other thoughts aside, and, if it be only as an act of piety towards Kōjū's soul,—
Curse not thy son!

Chorus. As thus the good man speaks,
Tears of entreaty pour adown his cheeks.
The father hears, and e'en his ruthless breast,
Soft'ning at last, admits the fond request,
While Nakamitsu, crowning their delight,
The flow'ry wine* brings forth, and cups that
might

Have serv'd the fays: but who would choose to set
Their fav'rite's bliss that, home returning, met
His grandsons' grandsons' still remoter line,
Beside the joy that doth itself entwine
Round the fond hearts of father and of son,
Parted and now in the same life made one?

Eshin. Prithee, Nakamitsu, wilt thou not dance and sing to us awhile in honour of this halcyon hour?
[During the following song Nakamitsu dances.]

* Literally, "the chrysanthemum wine." There is an old Chinese story of a peasant who, following up the banks of a stream bordered with flowering chrysanthemums, arrived at the mountain home of the elves and fairies. After spending a few hours feasting with them and watching them play at checkers, he set out on his homeward route, but found, to his amazement, on reaching the spot whence he had set out, that more than seven hundred years had elapsed, and that the village was now peopled by his own remote posterity. The ballad of "Urashima" at the beginning of this volume may be referred to as another way in which the Far Eastern mind has worked out the apparently world-wide tradition familiar to Europeans under the forms of Rip van Winkle and the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus.

“ Nor cease from toilsome study ; for if e’er
Thy sire again be anger’d, all is lost ! ”
Then takes his leave, low bending to the dust.
Forward they’re borne ; but Nakamitsu stays,
Watching and watching with heart-broken gaze,
And, mutely weeping, thinks how ne’er again
He’ll see his child borne homeward o’er the plain.



PART IV.

BASHŌ

AND

THE JAPANESE POETICAL
EPIGRAM.

BASHŌ AND THE JAPANESE POETICAL EPIGRAM.

I.

All Japanese poems are short, as measured by European standards. But there exists an ultra-short variety consisting of only seventeen syllables all told. The poets of Japan have produced thousands of these microscopic compositions, which enjoy a great popularity, have been printed, reprinted, commentated, quoted, copied, in fact have had a remarkable literary success. Their native name is *Hokku* (also *Haiku* and *Haikai**), which in default of a better equivalent, I venture to translate by "Epigram," using that term, not in the modern sense of a pointed saying,—*un bon mot de deux rimes orné*, as Boileau has it,—but in its earlier acceptation, as denoting any little piece of verse that expresses a delicate or ingenious thought. Before entering into historical details, it may be best to give a few examples, so as to make plain at once the sort of thing to which the reader's attention is invited. For a composition begun, continued, and ended within the limits of seventeen syllables must evidently

* See pp. 158 and 164-5 for an explanation of these terms.

differ considerably from our ordinary notions of poetry, there being no room in so narrow a space for most of what we commonly look for in verse. Take the following as representative specimens :—

(1)

17 { 5 *Naga-naga to*
7 *Kawa hito-suji ya*
5 *Yuki no hara**

A single river, stretching far
Across the moorland [swathed] in snow.

No assertion, you see, for the logical intellect, but a natural scene outlined in three strokes of the brush for the imagination or the memory. Just so in the next:—

* For the sake of those unfamiliar with Japanese prosody, it should be stated that I. This language acknowledges no diphthongs:—what appear to be such in a Romanised transliteration are really two independent syllables. II. Final *n* always counts as a whole syllable. The reason is a historical one, namely, that this final *n* generally represents the syllable *mu* in the archaic language, which tolerated no final consonants whatever. Thus the word *aruran*, “probably is,” counts as four syllables, and actually sound so to Japanese ears. The *m* in such words as *ambai*, *amma*, comes under the same rubric. III. To a similar cause must be ascribed the fact that syllables containing long vowels count double:—they all result from the crasis of two original short syllables, as *kōri*, “ice,” from *ko-ho-ri*. Some Chinese words with long vowels are written with three *Kana* letters, for instance 長 *chō*, “long,” as *chi-ya-u* チヤウ. As the classical poets admit no Chinese vocables, such cases do not present themselves in their compositions. The epigrammatists count all long syllables as equivalent to two short ones, irrespective of derivation and spelling, following in this the modern pronunciation. IV. Such combinations as *kwa*, *gwa*, *shu*, *cha*, etc., though written with two *Kana* letters, are also treated by the epigrammatists as monosyllables, because so pronounced.

Applying the above rules, it will be seen that such a verse as No. 3 is perfectly regular in its prosody, because the long syllable *yū* of *yūdachi* counts double. So is the following, where a novice might find it more difficult to make the count:—

(3)

17 { 5 *Suzushisa yo*
 7 *Yūdachi nagara*
 5 *Iru hi-kage*

How cool the air ! and through a shower
 The radiance of the setting sun.

(4)

17 { 5 *Hito-ha chiru*
 7 *Totsu hito-ha chiru*
 5 *Kaze no ue*

A leaf whirls down, alackaday !
 A leaf whirls down upon the breeze.

This last requires a word of explanation. It is not meant to call up any actual scene :—it is metaphorical. The Japanese poets were in the habit of composing some lines when taking leave of life,—a death-song in fact. The tiny composition here quoted—itsself a little leaf fallen two centuries ago—was the death-song of one of the most famous of epigrammatists. The words intimate his regret at parting from life, whirled down like an autumn leaf upon the breeze, to perish utterly and pass out of remembrance.

These specimens may serve to show the general character of the Japanese epigram. It is the tiniest of vignettes, a sketch in barest outline, the suggestion, not

(2)

17 { 5 *Gwanjitsu ya*
 7 *Kinō no oni ga*
 5 *Rei ni kuru*

On New Year's day, yesterday's dun
 Comes to present his compliments.

On the other hand, No. 17 (*inf.* p. 169) has a redundant syllable,—viz., 8 in the second line instead of 7, because the *mō* of *māshi-aguru* counts as two. Such cases of imperfect prosody are, as will be noticed later on, by no means uncommon.

the description, of a scene or a circumstance. It is a little dab of colour thrown upon a canvas one inch square, where the spectator is left to guess at the picture as best he may. Often it reminds us less of an actual picture than of the title or legend attached to a picture. Such a verse, for instance, as

(5)

Ura-kaze ya
Tomoe wo kuzusu
Mura-chidori

A troop of sea-gulls, and a gust
 Off shore that breaks their whirling flight.

—might it not, without the alteration of a single word, serve as the title of one or more of the water-colour sketches shown at any of our modern exhibitions? Or take this one by Bashō, the greatest of all Japanese epigrammatists ;—

(6)

Magusa ou
Hito wo shiori no
Natsu-no kana

Over the summer moor,—our guide
 One shouldering fodder for his horse.

Here anyone familiar with Japanese scenery sees mirrored the lush-green landscape, the sloping moor with its giant grass man-high, that obliterates all trace of the narrow winter pathway, while the bundle on some peasant's shoulder alone emerges far off on the skyline, and shows the wayfarers in which direction to turn their steps. Across a distance of ten thousand miles and an interval of two centuries, the spirit of the seventeenth century Japanese

poet is identical with that which informs the work of the Western water-colourist of to-day. It is intensely modern, or at least imbued to the full with that love and knowledge of nature which we are accustomed to consider characteristic of modern times. More rarely figures take the chief place, as when Bashō gives us the following :—

(7)

Chimaki yuu
Kata-de ni hasamu
Hitai-gami

She wraps up rice-cakes, while one hand
 Restrains the hair upon her brow.

A picture this of a rustic maiden at some village fair, attending to her business of selling cakes and lollipops to the holiday-makers, and at the same time not inattentive to her personal appearance. Or take an instance from a higher walk in life, from the Samurai caste of feudal days :—

(8)

Gwanjitsu ya
Ie ni yuzuri no
Tachi hakan

'Tis New Year's day :—I'll gird me on
 My sword, the heirloom of my house.

This, to be sure, is but a single touch, a mere indication. Nevertheless, as the leading thought, the keynote, so to say, of the subject is struck—for was not the sword called “the living soul of the Samurai?”—it practically suggests the whole picture. Without any verbose addition, there rises up before us the image of the warrior in his stiff-starched robes, ready for elaborate feudal ceremonies, for war, or for *harakiri*.

All the specimens hitherto quoted are on subjects commonly called "poetical." But the Japanese epigrammatists by no means confine themselves to such. They turn willingly to the homeliest themes. One of them tells us how cold he was in bed last night :—

(9)

Samukereba
Nerarezu neneba
Nao samushi

So cold I cannot sleep; and as
 I cannot sleep, I'm colder still.

Another exclaims

(10)

Yobi-kaesu
Funa-uri mienu
Arare kana

The fishmonger,—oh ! call him back !
 But he has vanished in the hail.

It is as if a window-pane had been thrown open, and instantly shut again. We have barely time to catch a passing glimpse of the circumstance hinted at.

A third grumbles, for that "the rainy season of June has turned his razor rusty in a single night," while a poetess, complaining of that same source of trouble, so familiar to us residents in Japan, declares that her "embroidered gown is spotted before it has even once been worn." The washing, the yearly house-cleaning, Christmas (or rather December) bills, even chilblains (!), come under the epigrammatist's ken. In fact, nothing is too trivial or too vulgar for him. Many epigrams have to do with packhorses, inns, and miscellaneous incidents of travel. Some contain historical allusions, or allusions to literature.

Some are "epigrams" in the exact etymological sense of the term, being inscriptions on pictures, fans, etc. Hardly any deal with love, which is surprising, as love takes high rank among the favourite themes in the other subdivisions of Japanese poetry.

II.

So much by way of preface and orientation. The Japanese epigram has had a long and curious history. When at its zenith, it allied itself with a system of ethical teaching; yet its origin can be traced to a paltry game. The thing merits investigation.

We find, then, that the earliest period of which trustworthy information has survived,—say, the sixth century of the Christian era,*—Japanese verse already consisted of the same extremely simple elements as characterise it at the present day. So simple and scanty, indeed, are these elements that one almost hesitates to employ the term "prosody" in discussing them. Neither rhyme, quantity, nor accentual stress was regarded, but a mere counting of syllables, eked out in some degree by adhesion to a traditional phraseology, more particularly to certain stock-

* The "*Kojiki*" and "*Nihongi*," which are the two earliest surviving works of Japanese literature, date only from A. D. 712. But their historical notices begin to be credible when dealing with events of the fifth century, and some of the poems preserved in them may, with a fair degree of probability, be attributed to the sixth century, if not earlier. Literal translations of both these early histories exist, but can be recommended only to the serious student.

epithets (the so-called "pillow-words" *). The style was naïve in the extreme, and expressed the naïve sentiments of a primitive people, to whom writing was unknown or at least unfamiliar, and literature not yet thought of as an art. All poems were brief, few extending beyond forty or fifty lines, most to little more than half that number. The rule determining their construction was that lines of five syllables and seven syllables must alternate, with an extra line of seven syllables at the end, to mark the completion of the poem. But even this simple rule was often violated, especially in the archaic age, for no apparent reason unless it were want of skill. Frequently the impression left on the ear is that of an almost total absence of metre. Anyhow, the normal form of the Japanese poem became fixed at 5, 7, 5, 7, 5, 7, ... 7, the number of lines being thus always odd. From the beginning, there had been an inclination to prefer poems of five lines to those of any larger number. Thus the *Tanka*, or "Short Ode," as it is termed, of 5, 7, 5, 7, 7—or 31 syllables in all—was established as the favourite vehicle of poetry. It never was what we term a "stanza :"—no Japanese poet ever employed it as the material out of which to build up longer poems by adding verse to verse, such composite versification never having approved itself to the simple native taste. When anything longer than thirty-one syllables

* The archaic poets of Japan sometimes began their compositions, not by a single harmonious though meaningless "pillow-word," but by a whole sentence unconnected with the sense of what followed and serving merely as an introduction to tickle the ear. This is technically known as a "preface." In the Middle Ages the authors of the lyric dramas invented a more complicated device, which has been termed a "pivot:"—a word having two significations is placed in the middle of the sentence and serves as a sort of hinge on which two doors turn, so that while the first part of the poetical phrase has no logical end, the latter part has no logical beginning. They run into each other, and the sentence could not possibly be construed; it passes before the mind like a dissolving view.

was wanted, an indefinite series of 5, 7, 5, 7 lines, with one of 7 at the end, was resorted to, as already indicated.

An impulse towards such more ambitious efforts was given in the seventh century, by the sudden advance of civilisation at that period under Chinese and Indian influence. The quickening of the national intellect through the advent of a new religion, the remodelling of the government, the introduction of innumerable new customs, wants, and industries, the general diffusion of the art of writing, and the study of Chinese literature, ended by invigorating even poetry. The years between, say, A.D. 700 and 760, when the first anthology—the well-known "*Manyōshū*"—was compiled, witnessed a veritable outburst of song. There were ballads, love-poems, elegies, descriptive poems, mythological poems that sometimes rise almost into majesty of expression, occasional poems of various import evidently inspired by genuine sentiment.* The foreign influence does not make itself obtrusively felt; it informed, without violently warping, the native taste. What it contributed to the technique of verse was chiefly a knowledge of that system of "parallelism" which was the rule in Chinese, and which the Japanese poets now adopted as an occasional ornament. Some of these compositions of the golden age ran into as many as 50, 70, or 100 lines. Generally, however, a thirty-one syllable verse on the same subject was appended, showing how curiously tenacious the Japanese taste was of that diminutive form. A contemporary critic might well have thought that the poetical literature of Japan was marching towards a great future.

Unfortunately, such was not the case. The wider inspiration died out within a single life-time. The next time that an Imperial anthology was called for (the "*Kokinshū*," published A. D. 905), only five poems out of

* Almost all the more ambitious compositions given in the first part of the present volume date from this period.

a total of over 1,100 attained to any length, and even these few are universally allowed to lack merit of any kind. All the rest were diminutive pieces each of thirty-one syllables only, and this continued ever after to be the classical form of verse. Very dainty some of these little verses are; for here again Chinese influence had been active, and had introduced numerous themes hitherto unthought of, besides suggesting a far more skilful use of language. The snow, the moon, the autumn leaves, the plum-blossom, even the cherry-blossom which is nowadays considered the national flower *par excellence*,—in fact well-nigh all the subjects that have ever since formed the commonplaces of Japanese verse, are Chinese importations of the ninth and tenth centuries. That the native prosody should have survived unchanged under these circumstances, may appear odd. The cause is doubtless to be sought in the profoundly divergent phonetic structure of the two languages, which made the adoption of Chinese metres and rhythms physically impossible. Here is a couple of representative specimens of the thirty-one syllable stanza, as turned out by innumerable poets from the ninth century down to our own day:—

Fuyu nagara
Sora yori hana no
Chiri-kuru wa—
Kumo no anata wa
Haru ni ya aruran

When from the skies that winter shrouds
 The blossoms flutter round my head,
 Surely the spring its light must shed
 On lands that lie beyond the clouds.*

* The "blossoms" are of course the snow-flakes, which, by a graceful Chinese conceit, are likened to the white petals of the cherry-flower. This little poem has already been given on p. 95 in a slightly more diffuse translation.

Hana mo mitsu
Hototogisu wo mo
Kiki-hatetsu—
Kono yo nochi no yo
Omou koto nashi

I've seen the flowers bloom and fade,
I have heard out the cuckoo's note:—
Neither in this world is there ought
Nor in the next to make me sad.

That is, the poet—a true Epicurean—has drunk to the dregs the cup of life, and has no fears for the life to come.

A somewhat free translation must be excused, as our English rhymed stanza is not easy to manage. Yet I hold to it, as fairly representative of the Japanese original, with which it agrees in length within one syllable (32 instead of 31), and also because, when halved, it will serve better than aught else to render the epigram.* In the case of the epigrams, which are far easier to translate, all the versions given in this paper are literal,—as literal, that is, as the disparity between English and Japanese idiom

* The whole question as to the best equivalents for alien metres is a notoriously difficult one. Some ingenious reader may point out that the Japanese epigram has exactly the same number of syllables (17) as the hexameter, when the latter runs to its full length of five dactyls. Nevertheless, I should not select that form as an equivalent in the present case, partly because the hexameter always sounds exotic in English, whereas the Japanese measure to be represented is nothing if not popular and familiar; but still more because the Greek or Latin hexameter possesses a grand resonance, and is in itself a complete unit perfectly rounded off, whereas the form of the Japanese epigram is essentially fragmentary, as will be explained later on. The somewhat jogging form which I have chosen, with its elementary metre and its suggestion of fragmentariness, appears to me to suit the case better.—In Part I of the present volume the thirty-one syllable stanza is rendered by an English Japanese stanza of four lines totalling forty syllables. The longer poems are rendered variously, an attempt having been made to determine which form of verse would most aptly reproduce, in each special instance, the spirit and movement of the original.

will allow. But in the specimen thirty-one syllable odes here quoted it is rather to the form that I would invite attention than to the matter, because in this particular form the epigram had its origin. It will be noticed that a dash has been placed after the third line of the Japanese original. This is because the voice always pauses in that place, after what is termed the "upper hemistich" (Jap. *Kami no ku*, also *Hokku*, lit. "initial hemistich"), consisting of 17 syllables. The "lower hemistich" (*Shimo no ku* or *Ageku*, lit. "raising" that is "finishing hemistich") consists of 14 syllables. The slight pause made between them for rhythmical purposes causes each to be recognised as a semi-independent entity, even when the sense flows on without interruption. This fact had an important result in what came after.

And now the Chinese influence, which so far had acted for good, took a baneful turn, introducing conventionality and frivolity. Poets—shall we rather say poetasters?—were no longer to draw their inspiration from their own hearts, and from the incidents of their lives:—they were encouraged to write to order. The social state of Japan at that period fostered the evil. There could be no popular or national literature; for the mass of the nation still lay beyond the pale of the only literary influence then known,—an alien one. The cultivation of letters was accordingly almost confined to Court circles, a Court itself bereft of political power, and where life had sunk into an effeminate round of ceremonies and diversions alike puerile and tiresome. Poetical tournaments (*uta-awase*) became a favourite pastime. In imitation of Chinese usage, themes were set, courtiers' wits were sharpened against each other, and prizes were adjudged. We even hear of gold dust and of landed estates being bestowed on successful competitors; but real poetry had ceased to live.

The next step was the introduction, at these poetry tournaments, of a Chinese game resembling our "capping

verses." At first, in the ninth and tenth centuries, the lords and ladies of Kyōto composed Chinese verses as nearly as possible after the mode prevalent at the Court of Nanking, on rhymes officially given out, and according to the intricate rules of Chinese prosody. But when, in the eleventh century, their first pro-Chinese ardour had cooled, and the task of writing in a foreign tongue was felt to be too irksome, they fell back on the traditional native stanza of thirty-one syllables. The game, then, in this stage, consisted in either fitting on a first hemistich to a second, or a second to a first. This was termed *Renga*, lit. "linked verses." Sometimes, supposing a second hemistich to have been given, ingenuity was exercised by the composition of more than one suitable first hemistich, whose merits would be discussed, and the palm awarded to the best by an umpire. The independence of each hemistich thus became accentuated; and if the second and less important half were to fall off, the *Hokku* or first hemistich would remain as an independent entity. This is what did in fact happen, and the form of the epigram was thus determined.

Things, however, did not at first move in that direction. For a long time—three or four centuries—the tendency was the other way; and here comes in the most curious part of the story. Instead of producing an ultra-short variety of verse, the new game seemed more likely to lead to a long and intricate variety. It would certainly have done so, had not the bent of the Japanese mind been too decidedly towards the small, the sketchy, no less in poetry than in painting and carving. The "linked verses," which, down at least to the year 1124, had consisted of two members only,—one upper and one lower hemistich,—were extended to a larger number, in imitation of Chinese models. This change had taken place by the beginning of the thirteenth century; and as the Far-Eastern mind habitually submitted all matters—even the most trivial—to rigid rule, a code was drawn up for the guidance of

verse-cappers. This code appeared in several recensions, of which the first dates from A. D. 1087, the latest from 1501. According to it, the length of a set of "linked verses" was extended to 8, to 50, and ultimately to 100 hemistichs, and a certain order was prescribed for the succession of subjects treated in each set. Thus, if the *Hokku* ("initial hemistich") spoke of the spring with special reference to January, the second hemistich must also refer to January, and end with a full stop. The third hemistich must introduce some idea appropriate, not to January only, but to the whole season of spring, and must end with the particle *te*, which roughly corresponds to our English participles in *ed* or *ing*; but should the second hemistich have included a *te*, then one of the particles *ni* or *ran*, or the phrase *mo nashi*, must be preferred. The fourth hemistich is a "miscellaneous" one, that is, no mention must be made in it of any of the four seasons. It should end with some such easy, graceful verbal termination as *nari* or *keri*. No. 5 is called the "Fixed Seat of the Moon," because here the moon must in any case be made mention of; and this and Nos. 6 and 7 are termed the "Three Autumn Hemistichs,—for the moon, which introduces these three, is the special property of autumn. All the hemistichs down to No. 6 inclusive are termed the "Initial Obverse" (*Sho-omote*), because always written on one side of the same sheet of paper; and (according to one authority at least) such subjects as religion, love, the shortness of life, and the expression of personal sentiments are forbidden therein. Hemistichs 7 to 12 (in some cases 7 to 14) are the "Initial Reverse" or "Reverse Corner" (*Sho-ura* or *Ura-kado*). No. 7, as already indicated, forms one of the three Autumn Hemistichs; but in No. 8 and those that follow, the choice of subjects is left free. The final hemistich (*Ageku*), however, must return to the subject of No. 1. The rules vary somewhat, according to the total number of hemistichs gathered together into a set. For instance, in

one variety of 36, whose name and number are derived from the Six-and-Thirty Poetical Geniuses of mediæval literature, there is a division into two sets of 18 each; and the first of these is subdivided into an Obverse of 6 and a Reverse of 12 hemistichs, while in the second subdivision, technically termed the "Leave-taking," the order is exactly contrary, the Obverse having 12 and the Reverse 6 hemistichs, while the "Fixed Places" for the mention of the moon and of the flowers are also exactly contrary, being respectively 5 and 11 in the one, and 11 and 5 in the other. I have here given only three or four of the technical terms with which the subject bristles, and will not claim the reader's attention for the elaborate rules regarding the collocation of subjects and the choice of words. Their minuteness almost passes belief, as when, for instance, it is ordained that the word *ikaga*, "how?" may not be repeated except at an interval of three hemistichs, nor the word *bakari*, "about," save at an interval of seven hemistichs; *hototogisu*, "cuckoo," only once in a set of 100, but *nobe*, "moorland" and *matsu koi*, "love kept waiting," twice. Additional rules provide for the preferential use of homonyms,—for instance, *ka* "fragrance," instead of *ka* "mosquito;" for anagrams of proper names, for alphabetical sequence in the order of the *Kana* syllabary,—all this in certain fixed places,—as also for the insertion of words upside down, as *mitsu*, "three," for *tsumi*, "sin," and for the introduction, not of actual words themselves, but of certain others with which they may form grammatical compounds. At this point even the Japanese commentator breaks down, confessing that the intricacies of the subject begin to baffle him. In fact, he ventures so far as mildly to suggest that "these rules, being too mechanical, must have interfered to some extent with the poetical value of the pieces composed." (!) Easier of comprehension is the classification of all the items allowed to be mentioned under the caption of each month. Thus, under January we find

New Year's day, the New Year sky, certain rice-cakes, a particular kind of wine, ferns, the straw and other emblems used in New Year decorations, various ceremonies, lotteries, gifts, the seven herbs of spring, the plum-blossom, the willow, etc. We also understand without difficulty, though perhaps with wonderment, that an elaborate set of rules prescribed the method to be followed in transcribing each set of poems on paper, as some of the pages were to have more written on them, some less. The paper itself, too, had to be folded in a peculiar manner, and the various pages possessed technical names, as already hinted at above.

All this is puerile enough. How far more absurd will it not appear, when closer scrutiny reveals the fact that the total of 36, 44, 50, 88, or 100 hemistichs thus tacked on to each other by unalterable rule gave no continuous sense! In the Chinese models the sense ran on continuously. But either these models were misunderstood, owing to their being read in anthologies which gave only "elegant extracts" of the chief "beauties," or else the Japanese stanza—or perhaps we should rather say the Japanese mind of that age—obstinately refused to lend itself to any but the shortest flights. To be sure, the work was done, or rather the game was played, under circumstances which would have cramped more soaring intellects. Notwithstanding the dominion of Chinese precedents over Japanese literature, which has already been commented on, a rule handed down from time immemorial forbade the use in poetry of any but purely native words. Thus, more than half the vocabulary was excluded; for half the vocabulary was Chinese, and these Chinese words comprised many of those in most familiar use, besides most of the terms denoting delicate shades of meaning. Their exclusion at once limited the scope of poetical expression, helped to make it artificial, and divorced it ever more and more from real life,

In serious poetry the ban placed on all foreign terms proved too strong to break, and has remained in force down to the present day. The result was that this serious poetry soon became fossilised in mannerism and vain repetitions. But even at Court,—solemn as the Court of Kyōto was,—a revulsion took place. As early as A.D. 905, we find the compilers of the "*Kokin-shū*" admitting to a corner of their anthology a small set of stanzas of more or less comic import, or characterised by conceits which overstepped the limits set by the rules of serious poetry. Such comic stanzas were termed *Haikai*, and the taste for them gradually spread. The subjects might be taken from common life; and common words—Chinese no less than native—were admitted into their vocabulary,—an innovation of far-reaching effect, for it gave free scope alike to the mind and the tongue, which had hitherto been bound in mediæval fetters. After some time, it became fashionable to compose "linked verses" in the new comic or colloquial style, which accordingly received the name of *Haikai no Renga*, that is, "comic linked verses." The first extensive collection of these was made by one Yamazaki Sōkan, an ex-Samurai who turned Buddhist priest,—a priest, apparently, of the jovial sort, as he forsook the world less to practise devotion than to be rid of the worries of feudal service. He lived from 1465 to 1553, and is commonly regarded as the father of the Japanese epigram, although another poet-priest, Sōgi Hōshi (1421-1502) was his elder by more than forty years. A noticeable feature of this period was the downward spread of the taste for this class of poetry into the inferior ranks of society.

Although the custom long persisted—indeed it is not quite dead even in our own day—of linking verses together according to the elaborate and puerile rules mentioned above, the *Hokku*, or "initial hemistich," had gradually come to be considered more important than all those that were tagged on to it. Its composition was habitually en-

trusted to the most skilful of the poets present at any poetry meeting, it was repeated from mouth to mouth when the others were forgotten, and many anthologies were devoted to it alone. Thus did it happen that though the word *Hokku* properly means "initial stanza," and *Haikai no Renga* properly means "comic linked verses," the two terms *Hokku* and *Haikai* have practically run together into one signification. They, as well as *Haiku* (which is a cross between the two), indifferently denote what we have ventured to term the Japanese "epigram." This epigram may be defined as a half-stanza originally of a comic, or at least a colloquial cast, which in time came to be composed in all moods,—grave as well as jocular, esthetic as well as trivial, classical as well as colloquial. Its permanently distinctive characteristics are two in number:—firstly, it is quite free in its choice whether of subject or of diction; secondly, it is essentially fragmentary, the fact that it is part only of a complete stanza, and that it is consequently not expected to do more than adumbrate the thought in the writer's mind, having never been lost sight of. All through its history, inditers of epigrams have devoted no small portion of their time to furbishing up the missing second halves of their staves. A second stave is always there *in posse* if not *in esse*,—a fact important to the would-be translator, because it shows him that in selecting a form for his versions, he should prefer one which is calculated to produce on the English ear the impression of fragmentariness. If he omits to notice this, he will fail in his chief duty,—that of rendering in some sort the movement of the original. The same consideration explains why the grammar of this style of verse is apt to be elliptical to the verge of obscurity,—past that verge indeed,—so that great numbers of verses are unintelligible as they stand. They are not (technically speaking) meant to stand so; it is assumed that something ought to follow. Accordingly, the reader is constantly called upon to supply, not only missing

verbs and particles, but whole clauses. The Japanese themselves often grope vainly in the obscurity thus caused, as the attempted explanations of the commentators amusingly testify. Little wonder, then, that the foreign student will be apt to find fully half, perhaps three-quarters, of the epigrams submitted to his notice enigmatical. Take this, for instance,

(11)

Hatsu-yuki ya
Are mo hito no ko
Taru-hiroi

lit. First snow, aye ! that too a child of man, picker-up of barrels.

Such a collocation of words sounds to us like absolute nonsense. But it is not nonsense ; it is only sense over-condensed. The meaning is : "That poor boy, walking along the streets picking up cast-off barrels in the first winter snow,—he, too, and others like him, miserable though be their lot, yet count among the sons of men, and as such deserve our pity." The signification is clear to the Japanese without periphrasis or comment, because they are habituated to such elliptical modes of expression. In fact, this verse has passed into a proverb. Or again,

(12)

Yo no naka wa
Mikka minu ma no
Sakura kana

lit. As for the world, oh ! cherry unseen during three days.

This, too, is proverbial, being equivalent to some such saying of ours as "The fashion of this world passeth away." Interpreted more closely, the exact sense conveyed is that "The world changes as rapidly as does a cherry-tree which one should not have visited for the space of three days.

He saw it in full bloom ; meantime the wind has blown, and left not a single blossom on the branches." Here, too, Japanese readers would require no explanation. There are, however, numerous cases in which the process of condensation has been carried so far as to baffle even them. This happens chiefly when the epigram refers to some particular circumstance or event, which has been forgotten. No ordinary educated Japanese would understand the following without explanation :—

(13)

Hirosawa ya
Hito-shigururu
Numatarō

Hirosawa must probably, says the commentator, be explained as the name of a place,—a large mere in the neighbourhood of Kyōto ; the grammar and metre of the second line are both shaky ; and the last word *Numatarō* has, it would seem, been coined as an equivalent for *hishi-kui*, a kind of wild-goose, which is here personified as the eldest son (*Tarō*) of the marsh (*numa*). Thus we arrive at some such sense as

"A wild-goose alone in a shower at Hirosawa."

which result, to say the least, sounds unattractive and uncomfortable. The impression which the author meant to convey—an impression of grey solitude and dreariness—could have been conveyed with far greater effect in intelligible language,—has in fact been so conveyed by other epigrammatists over and over again, for instance in these closely parallel lines :—

(14)

Mozu no iru
No-naka no kui yo
Kaminazuki

Lit. "Oh ! the post in the midst of the moor, on which a butcher-bird perches,—November !"

that is,

“ November, with a butcher-bird
Perched on a post on th’ open moor ”

a graphic suggestion, truly, of a dreary autumn scene.

The legitimate use of condensation—legitimate because of the vivid effect produced—is well-exemplified in the following verse by the poetess Chiyo, which ranks among the most famous productions of this Lilliputian literary form :—

(15)

Asagao ni
Tsurube torarete
Morai-mizu

Lit. Having had well-bucket taken away by convolvuli,—gift-water !

The meaning is this :—Chiyo, having gone to her well one morning to draw water, found that some tendrils of the convolvulus had twined themselves around the rope. As a poetess and a woman of taste, she could not bring herself to disturb the dainty blossoms. So, leaving her own well to the convolvuli, she went and begged water of a neighbour, —a pretty little vignette, surely, and expressed in five words.

But to return to the historical sketch of our subject, which was interrupted by the need for explanation and comment. It was mentioned a page or two back that the first collectors of “epigrams,” as distinguished from the “linked verses” of which these same epigrams were originally but fragments, was Yamazaki Sōkan, a Buddhist priest whose long life extended from A. D. 1465 to 1553. Great numbers of priests belonging to the Zen sect of Buddhism devoted themselves at this period, and for a couple of centuries more, to the art of versification and to

esthetics generally. Some few Shintoists did likewise. A Shintō priest of the Sun-Goddess's temple at Ise, named Arakida Moritake (1472-1549), a contemporary of the father of epigrammatic poetry just mentioned, specially distinguished himself; but his compositions, and indeed all those of this early age, retained a strong comic tinge. The composers themselves, despite their ecclesiastical character, were much given to eccentric frolics, and to all the *sans-gêne* of a semi-Bohemian life. To their honour be it added that, while fun counted in their eyes for a great deal, money counted for nothing at all. Yamazaki Sōkan is said to have lived on ten cash a day, and to have had no other furniture in his cell than a single kettle. The prettiest of his verses that has survived is the following, which is worthy of the later, classic age :—

(16)

Koe nakuba
Sagi koso yuki no
Hito-tsurane

But for its voice, the heron were
 A line of snow, and nothing more.

How often has not this subject been treated by the Japanese painter, as a delicate symphony in white! But, as already remarked, almost all his compositions verge on the comic, for instance this one, comparing, not inaptly, the posture of the frog to that which a Japanese assumes when squatting respectfully, with his hands stretched out on the mats to address a superior :—

(17)

Te wo tsuite
*Uta mōshi-aguru **
Kawazu kana

* Note the polite word *mōshi-aguru*, used in addressing a superior.

Oh! the frog, with its hands on the floor, lifting up [its voice
in] song!

Puns were much sought after, as in

(18)

Yo ni furu wa
Sara ni shigure no
Yadori kana

where *furu* has a double signification:—firstly, construed with *yo*, it means “dwelling in the world,” while secondly construed with *shigure*, it means “a shower falling,” so that the entire sense meant to be conveyed—though the actual words merely adumbrate it—is that “Man’s sojourn in this world is as transitory as a shelter to which one may betake oneself during a shower.” But to cap verses cleverly was still the poet’s chief aim. Some one having proposed as second hemistich the lines,

Kiritaku mo ari
Kiritaku mo nashi

I want to kill him, and [at the same time] I don’t want to kill him,—

Yamazaki Sōkan immediately added the first hemistich

(19)

Nusubito wo
Toraete mireba
Waga ko nari

On looking at the thief whom I have caught, [behold] it is my own child.

This epigram has remained proverbial for a wish, which, when fulfilled, turns out to be anything but pleasant.

On another occasion—it was in the tenth month of a certain year—the Shintō priest above mentioned, on entering the apartment where a poetical tournament was to be

held, and perceiving that the whole assemblage consisted of Buddhists, exclaimed in verse

(20)

*O zashiki wo
Mireba izure mo
Kaminazuki*

to which Sōgi responded with the second hemistich

*Hitori shigure no
Furi-eboshi kite*

The contrast insisted on by the two ready wits is that between the shaven pates of the Buddhists and the curious gauze cap worn by Shintō priests over their natural hair. But this is not all:—there are two puns to be taken into account, and *Kaminazuki* is here the first important word. It signifies literally “the month without Shintō gods.” The tenth month of the year is so styled in Japanese poetical and religious parlance, because of a tradition to the effect that in that month all the Shintō gods and goddesses forsake their other shrines in order to hold a conclave at the great temple of Izumo. The sight of a party consisting exclusively of Buddhists would naturally remind a Shintoist of the absence of his Shintō gods, and furthermore, as *kami* means “hair” as well as “god,” the syllables *kami na[shi]* suggest “no hair,” in allusion to the Buddhist shaven heads, so that the upper hemistich comes to mean “On looking round the apartment, I see none but Buddhists.” In the second hemistich the word *shigure*, “shower,” which has nothing to do with the matter in hand, forms a sort of punning “pillow-word” to introduce *furi*, which has the sense of “raining,” and which at the same

time recalls *furui*, "old," thus giving the sense of "Yes, but there is one Shintoist among us in his old gauze cap." Both hemistichs are decidedly clever in the original, though the sparkle is of course lost and the point blunted by the laborious process of elucidation in a foreign tongue.

A few more examples of the compositions of this, the earliest, age of Japanese epigram will be found at the end of the present essay. The authors above mentioned each had numerous pupils, by whom their tradition was continued. But no eminent names are recorded till the close of the sixteenth century, when a Samurai called Matsunaga Teitoku (1571-1653) became the legislator for epigrammatic poetry by the publication of a work entitled *O-Garagasa*, in which its rules were detailed apart from those that had so long guided the composers of "linked verse." Of the latter, too, he was the acknowledged master in his day, and was accordingly nominated by Imperial decree to the post of *Hana-no-moto*, which may be rendered "the Flowery Seat,"—a laureateship which carried with it the control over all minor teachers and pupils in the poetry schools by the granting or withholding of diplomas, etc.; for in the Japan of that age everything was legislated for,—even verse and versifiers. This particular poet, though highly eccentric and finally blind, left a flourishing school, from which shone out with particular lustre five disciples known to fame as the "Five Stars." Even such a Confucian scholar as Hayashi Razan, even so eminent a Japanologue as Kitamura Kigin, did not disdain to take lessons from him in epigram; and the great Bashō himself was, poetically speaking, his descendant of the second generation. His verses appear to me somewhat formal; but he had the merit of avoiding vulgarity. Teishitsu (1608-1671), one of the "Five Stars," equalled, if he did not surpass, his master, though it is related that he had so poor an opinion of his own productions that he considered only three worth preservation, and committed all the rest to the flames. One

of these three has been held by the best judges* to be the finest epigram ever written. It runs as follows:—

(22)

*Kore wa kore wa
To bakari hana no
Yoshino-yama*

The verse resists all attempts at adequate representation in English; but the gist of it is that the mountains of Yoshino, when covered with the cherry-blossom, baffle description by their loveliness, and leave the beholder nothing but inarticulate exclamations of wonder and delight. This poet also had five specially eminent pupils, known in literary history as "The Two Guests and the Three Men." With them the first or introductory period of the Japanese epigram, as cultivated at Kyōto, may be said to close. Its latest members were contemporary with the rise of two other schools,—the *Danrin Ha* at Yedo,

* By such men, for instance, as Bashō. But Aeba Kōson, an ingenious modern critic, has pointed out a flaw in the verse:—it is not characteristic enough. *Mutatis mutandis*, the same words might be applied to other unique scenes, as *Kore wa kore wa—To bakari yuki no—Fuji no yama*, substituting Fuji with its snows for Yoshino with its flowers. Among epigrams on Yoshino, this critic would award the palm to the following (by the poet Ryōta), which could not be transferred to any other scene:—

(21)

*Shira-kumo ya
Chiru toki hana no
Yoshino-yama*

Its purport is to liken the falling petals of the cherry-blossoms of Yoshino to a white cloud. Perhaps one might render it thus: "A white cloud,—nay! Mount Yoshino with its blossoms as they flutter down."

which plunged into intricacy, mannerism, and exaggeration, and Bashō's school which finally led Japanese poetry back into the paths of good taste and good morals.

The origin of the *Danrin* School was on this wise. A Samurai from the province of Higo, named Nishiyama Sōin (1605-1682), whose lord had been cashiered, wandered off to Ōsaka and Kyōto, where he shaved his head as a Buddhist priest and prayed for poetical inspiration to the god Temmangū, at whose shrine each of his compositions was successively offered up. Such pious preparation would lead the European student to expect some grave and serious result; but in Japan they manage these matters differently. The result in this case was that the poet went in for every kind of verbal jugglery and ingenious conceit! Meantime, at the then recently founded and luxurious city of Yedo, a similar meretricious taste had found a home in a little coterie of versifiers who were weary of the simplicity of the earlier Kyōto school. Their club, which was known by the title of *Danrin*, or "The Forest of Consultation," warmly welcomed Nishiyama to Yedo in 1664. He became its leader, and, by roving all over the country from Nagasaki to the extreme north, where one of the local Daimyōs enrolled himself among his pupils, he spread the new mode far and wide, assisted therein by his contemporary Saikaku, the favourite novelist of the day, whose stories were alike admirable in style and abominable in matter. His epigrams, fortunately—at least those that I have seen quoted—do not appear to have shared in this coarseness. Tradition credits him with having composed twenty thousand of them in a single day. Here are a few examples of the verses of the *Danrin* School:—

(23)

Naga-mochi ni
Haru kakure-yuku
Koromo-gae

A change of garments, and the spring
Goes into hiding in the chest

that is to say, "When we stow away our heavier garments on the approach of summer, spring hides itself in our trunks or closets till next year,"—a conceit which it doubtless cost the composer some trouble to excogitate.

(24)

Kumo no mine ya
Yama minu kuni no
Hiroi-mono

A lucky find,—the peaks of cloud,—
For countries that no mountains see

that is, "In flat countries, how glad the natives must be to see mountainous masses of cloud!"—another conceit of like calibre to the first.

(25)

Moshi nakaba
Chōchō kago no
Ku wo uken.

Did it but sing, the butterfly
Might have to suffer in a cage

in other words, "'Tis fortunate for the butterfly that its voice is not as beautiful as its wings; for in that case it would run the risk of being shut up in a cage by those who would fain hear it sing,"

(26)

Tsuki-yo yoshi
Tachitsu itsu netsu
Mitsu-no-hama

The actual sense here conveyed is, "Beauteous is the moonlight night at Mitsu-no-hama, whether one stand up, or lie down." But the real point must be sought in the sound of the words,—the three *tsu*'s of *Tachitsu itsu netsu*, resumed in the word *mitsu*, which itself signifies, "three."

(27)

Sareba aki
To mōsu iware no
Nobe sōrō

Here again the matter signifies little; it is the manner that amuses. The meaning, so far as there is any, is merely that the aspect of the moor proclaims the autumn season. But, apart from a pun on the word *nobe* which may mean either "to proclaim" or "a moor-side," an irresistibly droll effect is produced by the employment of the stiff epistolary style, than which nothing can be further from the spirit of poetry. One poetess even composed her death-song in this mock epistolary style:—

(28)

Tsuki mo mite
Ware wa kono yo wo
Kashiku kana

which may be rendered into fairly equivalent English thus;—

And having seen the moon, I now
 To this world have the honour to be

that is to say, "Having enjoyed the world, its beauties and its glories, I now have the honour to remain your humble servant, etc., etc., and to depart this life." It seems a poor joke to die with.

Literary conceits are, of all things, the hardest to transfer from one language to another. Still, even the slight indications here given may suffice to show how naturally and inevitably the fireworks of the Danrin School would eclipse the productions of the earlier epigrammatists, with their quiet prettinesses and their innocent little puns. For a whole generation this sort of thing hit the public taste, just as "smart" writing has done in our own day among Anglo-Saxons. The only question was as to who should express the most far-fetched ideas in the most unexpected words. Sometimes it was a clever literary allusion,—a Confucian maxim, perhaps, masquerading in modern Japanese guise;—sometimes an astounding exaggeration; at others something new in the mere phrasing,—a horribly vulgar word, or else a solemnly classical one,—anything in short, provided that the effect was warranted to startle. As for the matter, that was a *quantité négligeable*.

III.

Such was the state of Japanese poetry—for the epigram was the only species of poetry that retained any life—when a man appeared, named Bashō, who was destined to infuse into it a totally new spirit. This remarkable person was born in the year 1644 at Ueno, in the province of Iga.

He came of ancient Samurai lineage, and from boyhood had been the favourite companion of his Daimyō's son. This accomplished youth, himself no mean scholar and poet, was at once Bashō's feudal lord, his teacher, and his friend. When death prematurely removed him, Bashō, then a boy of sixteen, was so distraught with grief that home and the ordinary avocations of a Samurai could no longer restrain him. Despite the Daimyō's injunctions, he fled privately, carrying with him a lock of his dead young lord's hair to the great Buddhist monastery of Kōya-san, and leaving behind him a very pretty verse of adieu to the comrades of his youth:—

(29)

*Kumo to hedatsu**Tomo ka ya kari no**Iki-wakare*

The words are not susceptible of exact translation into English; but their drift is that the writer is now severed for life from his former friends, as the soaring wild-geese are from each other by the clouds of heaven. In the autumn of the same year he abandoned the world, in order to throw himself into the arms of poverty and mysticism. Many contradictory versions are given of the exact reasons for his retirement. One, for which there is no shadow of proof, but which has been made the theme of a popular drama, implicates his moral character, telling of an intrigue with his lord's wife. But the simplest explanation is to be found in that pessimistic and ascetic tinge, which, though alien to the Japan of the twentieth century, had been impressed on the national mind during the mediæval period of civil war and misery, and which, long before Bashō's time, had driven warriors and nobles innumerable to lay aside worldly dignities. After the final pacification of the country about the year 1600, under the sway of the Tokugawa Shōguns, the same causes no longer operated.

But in their place, for all members of the Samurai caste or military gentry, there came a grinding, omnipresent routine, a ceaseless round of minute ceremonial observances, which made life a burden to any but the most prosaic spirits. Little wonder that heads of families became *inkyō*, as it was called,—that is, retired from active life, as early as possible, as the only escape from official tyranny, the only means of following their own tastes,—while others, more impatient still, threw over the traces even in youth by sheltering themselves under the shadow of the Buddhist profession, whose power in the land was still a mighty one. Many became Buddhist priests in form only, renouncing their hereditary names and titles, shaving their heads, and donning priestly robes, but devoting themselves to pleasure, nowise to religion. Such were the esthetes who, as play-mates of Shōguns and other exalted personages, developed the tea ceremonies, planned most of the beautiful gardens at Kyōto, and helped to advance all the fine arts. Others were genuine converts; many seem to have stood half-way between mystic fervour and artistic or literary culture. Bashō's position was peculiar. Genuinely converted, a mystic of the Zen sect to the tip of his fingers, his aim was yet strictly practical; he wished to turn men's lives and thoughts in a better and higher direction, and he employed one branch of art, namely poetry, as the vehicle for the ethical influence to whose exercise he had devoted his life. The very word "poetry" (at least *haikai*, which we must here perforce translate by "poetry" rather than by "epigram") came in his mouth to stand for morality. Did any of his followers transgress the code of poverty, simplicity, humility, long-suffering, he would rebuke the offender with a "This is not poetry" (literally, "not epigram"), meaning "this is not right." But more often he contented himself with preaching by example.

But to return to his biography. Having freed himself in early youth from all official duties, and having deter-

mined to lead a life devoted to virtue and to intellectual achievement, he went to Ōsaka and Kyōto, and wandered with special delight amid the mountain fastnesses of Yoshino, which had been the favourite retreat of his favourite poet, Saigyō Hōshi. There he bathed in the brooks and rested in the shady valleys, and meditated on the impermanence of human fate. This life and the composition of poetry helped to calm his spirit. A verse from those days preserves the memory of his early struggles:—

(30)

Tsuyu toku-toku
Kokoromi ni uki-yo
Sosogaba ya

Where the dews drop, there would I fain
 Essay to wash this frivolous world

that is, “I would wash away from me all taint of the world by a plunge into pure nature.”—The deep gulf separating utterances like this from the futilities of previous epigrammatists need scarcely be pointed out. Bashō's position as poet and as moralist is here taken up, never to be relinquished. Soon afterwards we find him at Yedo, where he studied all the literature then accessible under the best masters,—masters whose names have remained famous to this very day,—Chinese philosophy and *belles-lettres* under Itō Tan-an, Japanese classical poetry and prose under Kitamura Kigin, modern poetry under Yamaguchi Sodō, Buddhism under Butchō Oshō. He constantly carried about with him one or other of the chief works of the standard authors, and several of these he knew by heart; so that when he came to employ epigram as his vehicle of expression, he did so with a mind full of ideas differing widely from the idle conceits which had formed the stock-in-trade of his predecessors in that art.

But though so great a reader, his favourite book of all was nature, which he studied in extensive wanderings almost all over Japan. From the year 1672 onwards, his residence—so far as he can be said to have had any permanent residence—was at Yedo in a little villa, or rather cottage, in the garden of a friend, a well-to-do citizen, where grew some banana-trees (Jap. *bashō*), which suggested the literary pseudonym by which he is known to fame; for here he parenthetically remarked that almost all Japanese artists and poets take some such pseudonym, often several. The whole literary world of the new metropolis seems to have at once kindly welcomed him. Soon he became the acknowledged leader of those who wrote verse; and the almost yearly publication of some new work led even such as had hitherto practised other styles to renounce them, and to proclaim themselves his pupils. Every rank of society contributed its quota. The majority perhaps were priests,—at least priests in name; but we find also physicians, tradesmen, Samurai, even Daimyōs, and not grown men only, but boy students, and ladies too of various degrees enrolled in this truly democratic literary circle, which so strangely maintained its private liberty in the midst of the rigidly fettered social organism that enveloped it on every side.

About the year 1682, Bashō seems to have experienced a second conversion; at any rate his study of the doctrines of the Zen sect of Buddhism then became more earnest, owing to continued intercourse with the Buddhist teacher above mentioned, aided by conversations with the latter's personal attendant, who, though an illiterate man, had attained to spiritual enlightenment. The learned abbot endeavoured at first to wean him from the composition of epigrams, on the ground of their frivolity. The story goes that, as the two were strolling one day in a country lane, the abbot said, "You, who turn everything into idle verse, what useful thing could you find to say about this mallow

by the roadside?" Bashō at once responded with the stanza

(31)

Michi-no-be no
Mokuge wa uma ni
Kuware-keri

The mallow-flower by the road
 Was eaten by a [passing] horse

and the abbot owned himself vanquished in the dispute; for the moral lesson conveyed in those few words was too obvious:—"Had not the mallow pressed forward into public view, the horse would never have devoured it. Learn, then, ambitious man, to be humble and retiring. The vulgar yearning for fame and distinction can lead nowhither but to misery, for it contradicts the essential principle of ethics."

The following epigram, which every Japanese has by heart, also probably dates from this period:

(32)

Furu-ike ya
Kawazu tobi-komu
Mizu no oto

The old pond, aye! and the sound of a frog leaping into the water.

From a European point of view, the mention of the frog spoils these lines completely; for we tacitly include frogs in the same category as monkeys and donkeys,—absurd creatures scarcely to be named without turning verse into caricature. The Japanese think differently:—the frog, in their language, has even a poetical name—*kawazu*—besides its ordinary name, *kairu*, and its very croak appeals to them as a sort of song. The picture here outlined of some mouldering temple enclosure with its ancient piece of water,

stagnant, silent but for the occasional splash of a frog, suggests to them the meditative and pathetic side of life. To them it appears natural that the "attainment of enlightenment," as the Buddhists call it, or conversion, as we say in Christian parlance, should express itself in some such guise.

The foreign student may at first feel somewhat sceptical concerning the moral signification attributed to many of Bashō's epigrams. The justice of such a method of interpretation is of course difficult to prove convincingly. Nevertheless, the testimony of tradition must be allowed some weight, and I have been brought to believe that a thorough study of the influence of the mysticism of the Zen sect in Japan would bear out native tradition in its attribution of "inner meanings," not to Bashō's writings merely, but to the writings and even the actions of many other men of that and previous periods. In any case, whether its current method of interpretation be true or false, it has been so widely received that no study of the Japanese epigram would be complete without some reference to it.

According to the accepted account, Bashō's change of views, his conviction of the transitoriness of all things earthly, and his consequent determination to have no longer any fixed home, were accelerated by the impression left on his mind by the burning of his house in the fire of January, 1683, which destroyed the greater part of Yedo. It is said that he had to throw himself into the pond in his little garden to avoid being burnt alive, a literal illustration of the text familiar to him as a good Buddhist, which teaches that "[man's life] is like unto a house on fire," that is, equally sure of swift destruction. Though his pupils clubbed together to rebuild his modest abode, though they even undertook to feed him, he is to be found from that time forward almost constantly on the road. The Tōkaidō, the Nakasendō, the provinces around Kyōto in-

cluding his own native province of Iga, and above all the shores of beautiful Lake Biwa, of which some of his favourite pupils were natives and which have thus become classic ground in the annals of Japanese poetry,—all these districts were visited and re-visited, and commemorated in a series of diaries interspersed with stanzas, such as the “*No-zarashi Kikō*,” the “*Sarashina Kikō*,” the “*Oi no Shōbun*,” and various others, not to mention the “*Saru-mino Shū*” and other anthologies, besides didactic works on the composition of epigram. His most distant journey was one to the North, when, beginning with Nikkō and the moor of Nasu, he continued on to Matsushima, thence up the river Kitakami, afterwards across country to the opposite or Western coast, and back through the provinces of Uzen, Echigo, etc., into Mino. We know the exact day when he and his companion started,—the 16th May, 1689,—we know the weather they encountered, the people they met, the thoughts they thought,—for all this is chronicled in a diary entitled “*Oku no Hoso-michi*,” which may perhaps be freely rendered as “Our Trail Northward.” The whole thing may sound not so very unlike the tour of a modern globe-trotter. Mr. Aston, in his charming “History of Japanese Literature,” has accordingly spoken of Bashō as “a great traveller.” But I venture to think that this term, with its prosaic connotation, may mislead. He always spoke of himself as a pilgrim (*angya*). If he wandered up and down the country, it was in order to commune with mountains, and rivers, and forests, and waterfalls, in order to ponder on scenes of antiquity, and in order to realize in himself the Buddhistic ideal and to communicate it to his followers in all parts of the empire, as much by the contact of his personality as by the example of his verse. If he visited every place famous in song and legend and history,—battle-fields as well as graves and temples and places famed for beauty, he did so seeking not so much information, as does the intelligent but cold-blooded

"traveller" of our own day and race, as edification. In other words, his aim was "enlightenment" in the Buddhist sense,—a thing superficially akin to, yet fundamentally differing from, what we term "information," because the end in view is not scientific, intellectual, but ethical. Sometimes he might take a lift on a horse, or even in a palanquin; but the plan generally followed by him and the two or three pupils whom he permitted to share his wanderings, was to go on foot, dressed in the poor garb of a pilgrim, and carrying no luggage save a wallet which contained his writing-box and a few books. Sometimes they would sleep at a wayside inn, sometimes at a peasant's hut, sometimes in the open air. Not infrequently, owing to Bashō's wide-spread reputation, the hospitality of some great house was pressed on him; nor was it refused, though he knew on an occasion how to rebuke the ostentation even of a host. For instance, when spending a few days at the rich city of Kanazawa on the northern pilgrimage just mentioned, a grand feast was organised in his honour by the local leaders of literary society. When it was over, he thanked them for their kind intentions on his behalf, but added bluntly that such feasting on rare and expensive viands was nowise to his taste, nor at all compatible with the poetic life, that his own custom was to take his siesta on a moor or to sit under a tree to avoid a shower, that if he required food he would ask for it, and in fine that only on condition of perfect sobriety and simplicity, would he consent to keep up intercourse with his present hosts. The rebuke, tempered doubtless by the courtly, old-fashioned manners for which he was noted, was taken in good part. At the next meeting, nothing was provided but tea, and there was all the more leisure for fruitful discourse on poetry, and for the composition of verses by all present, and for their correction, according to established Japanese custom, by the master himself. At length he suggested that the company might be feeling hungry, and would be

grateful for a little cold rice. Thereupon no servant, but the master of the house himself, brought in the family rice-tub, and helped each guest to a bowl or two of rice, with pickles as the sole condiment. The whole company gathered round in a circle to share the frugal repast, and Bashō's thanks were warmly expressed for the readiness shown in complying with his recommendation of plain living and high thinking.

The severe simplicity observed in his cottage at Yedo is described by a writer who visited him there in the year 1684. The same writer affords us a quaint peep at the life led in those days by two of his pupils, who afterwards rose to great celebrity,—Kikaku and Ransetsu. These youths, with one other, inhabited a room of eight mats, bare of all conveniences save one pan and one kettle, and having for sole ornament an image of the infant Buddha stuck in a hole in the wall. The three owned but a single quilt between them, from which, as it was rather short, their toes stuck out at night; and when they felt cold, they got up and composed verses. Yet they came of parents well-born and not specially poor, and they had been trained in the best schools. Some of the houses inhabited by the members of this semi-religious, semi-Bohemian circle had rules written up prescribing the conduct which all guests were expected to observe. One excellent code, which was followed in a rich house near Kyōto where Bashō was always a welcome guest, forbade, among other things, "arguing and loud snoring."

Never to yield to anger was one of Bashō's fixed principles. Another was universal charity, not towards men only, but towards animals. His vivid realisation of the Buddhistic doctrine of the essential identity of all sentient existence, whether brute or human, seems to have become an ingrained feeling, to which many of his best-known stanzas bear witness, for instance :—

(33)

Hana ni asobu
Abu na kui so
Tomo-suzume

Sparrow, my friend,* oh! do not eat
 The bees† that hover o'er the flowers!

(34)

Hai-ide yo
Kai-ya no shita no
Hiki no koe

'Tis a toad's croak. Come! hop away
 From underneath the fancier's house.‡

He would not allow of unkindness to animals so much as in thought. An anecdote will serve to illustrate this point. As he and his pupil Kikaku were riding along a country lane one day, the latter, espying a red dragon-fly, cried out in verse

(35)

Aka-tombo
Hane wo tottara
Tō-garashi

* One might also translate *tomo-suzume* by "companion sparrows," i.e. sparrows flying in flocks. In the present connection, however, this is less likely to have been the poet's meaning.

† *Abu* generally means the "horsefly." But another smaller insect is also so called,—apparently a species of bee, which hums and is fond of hovering over flowers.

‡ Bird-fanciers catch toads, in order to fatten them up and use their skins to make pouches of, or they sell the flesh of the creatures themselves as medicine. The kindly poet wishes this toad to escape such a fate.

i.e., "Pluck off the wings of a red dragon-fly, and you have a Cayenne pepper-pod." But Bashō reproved him for so cruel a fancy, and corrected the verse thus :—

Tō-garashi
Hane wo tsuketara
Aka-tombo

i.e., "Add wings to a Cayenne pepper-pod, and you have a red dragon-fly."

His ardent love of all sentient beings and even of inanimate nature, especially of flowers, showed itself further in a minute observation of natural objects and their ways, and this became a characteristic of the whole later epigrammatic school, moulded as it was by his influence. Doubtless an element of weakness as well as of strength was contained herein; for the perpetual observation of small natural details encouraged a mode of thought prone to dwell on the surface of the visible world, while neglecting the depths and heights of human nature. This has always been a weak point in the intellectual armour of the Far-Eastern nations :—they have never fully realised that "the proper study of mankind is man," and accordingly their art and philosophy alike have remained on a comparatively lower plane.

The purity of Bashō's life—a thing far from common in the Japan of those days—was patent to the world. But he was no prude. On one occasion, at a country inn in the North, he found himself in the room next to that where slept, or rather chattered, two unhappy girls,—courtesans. They were bound on a pilgrimage to Ise, in atonement for their ill-spent lives, and the man-servant who had accompanied them so far was to return from that post-station, leaving them to pursue their long journey alone. Next morning, noticing the priestly garb of their neighbour and of his companion, they begged to be allowed to journey part of the way in the company of the holy men, or, if that were

asking too much, at least in sight of them. This Bashō excused himself from ; but he spoke kindly, assuring the girls of the divine care for wayfarers, even such as they. The epigram which he then composed has remained famous :—

(36)

Hitotsu-ya ni

Yūjo mo netari

Hagi to tsuki

The literal interpretation of these words is “Courtesans [and I] slept in the same house,—the lespedeza and the moon.” The meaning is that “Occasion will make the greatest strangers companions,—as the moon in heaven and the lespedeza blossom on earth, as priests vowed to a life of sanctity and girls fated to a life of shame. The happier should not altogether condemn or disown the less fortunate, no, not even the guilty, who may often be more sinned against than sinning.”

Another of Bashō's marked characteristics was a contempt for shams and for triviality of every kind. True, he could not altogether free himself from the literary conventions of his time and nation ; yet he did so to a considerable degree. It was noticed that, of his many thousands of epigrams, not one dealt with Mount Fuji, or with the cherry-blossoms of Yoshino, or with the pine-clad islets of Matsushima,—subjects which custom had, in a manner, imposed on all Japanese writers of verse. Moreover, Yoshino had been one of his favourite haunts, and Fuji of course a familiar friend on tramps innumerable. He even made a long journey (which was more than the majority of versifiers did) to see Matsushima with his own eyes ; but when he had seen it, he confessed that all that could be said on the subject had been said already, and therefore would not write, having nothing new to tell.

To the so-called rules of composition he paid little heed,—so little in fact that his followers, themselves

anxious for rules to guide their own practice, had to allow that their teacher stood outside the rules. He appears to have instinctively felt the absurdity of all the grave legislation which there had been for such little cockle-shells of verse; but actual revolt was as foreign to the Zen spirit in artistic matters as in social or political. Bashō's theory and practice were resumed in the four Chinese words 不易流行 *fu-eki ryū-kō*, which may be freely rendered as "unchanging truth in fleeting form," that is, the matter must be such as has permanent interest, the manner must be that of the writer's age,—as good a definition as could perhaps be given of a classic. Truth, he said, has ever been considered "the marrow of style," and he defined truth of style as consisting in repose and in simplicity. Again, "In composing, compose not overmuch:—you will lose genuineness. Let your epigrams spring from the heart rather than from art." And to a correspondent he wrote, "Your zeal for epigram is good news. But epigrams from the heart are more important than erudition. Many men there are who can turn a phrase; there are few who observe the heart's rules." Or take such utterances as the following:—"Style should be natural, with a graceful turn. Ingenuity and the search after what is strange are less to be recommended.....Follow nature, and constantly turn to nature.....Let your epigrams resemble a willow-branch struck by a light shower, and sometimes waving in the breeze." Furthermore, he never wearied of impressing on his pupils that they should lead the poetic life, for that then the words of their poems would flow spontaneously; and it was observed that he rarely, if ever, discoursed on art alone, but constantly brought in the ethical element, for which above all he really cared, poetry being to him a means rather than an end. Accordingly, as already noticed, he paid little heed to traditional rules. Even prosody counted for little in his practice. Though no author had Japanese prosody—such as it is—in more

perfect command, none offers so many examples of rhythm broken by redundant syllables, doubtless because his instinct told him that the poetic form current in his day and nation was unreasonably short, and because he therefore preferred breaking through the form to sacrificing the sense. The following may serve as one instance among many:—

(37)

*Kare-eda ni**Karasu no tomari-keri**Aki no kure*

The end of autumn, and some rooks
Are perched upon a withered branch

The second line has nine syllables instead of the regular seven; but it would be impossible to convey more forcibly in one brief phrase the idea of autumnal desolation, and that was all that Bashō cared for. This was an “epigram” in the literal sense of the word, having been inscribed on a sketch of three crows huddling on a leafless branch. Other examples of lines with superfluous syllables will be found in the little anthology at the end of this paper. The Japanese have never been sticklers for prosodial accuracy; but Bashō allowed himself an unusual latitude.

Bashō's health, always delicate, seems to have been worn out by his constant wanderings, which exposed him to many hardships. He died at the age of fifty, while on the road as usual, busy spreading his ideas, ethical and poetical. He had been entertained at Ōsaka at the house of the poetess Sono-Jo, where some mushrooms poisoned him. A minute account has been preserved of his last days. He lingered for a fortnight, his chief pupils gathering round him and nursing him with filial care. When it became evident that no hope remained, they requested him to compose a death-bed stanza, according to the universal custom of Japanese poets. But he refused, being unwilling

to sanction by his example a practice which he thought led to vanity and deceit, for that insincere persons were wont to get their so-called death-bed poems ready long beforehand, wherewith to cheat the world at their last hour. Nevertheless, next morning, he called two of the watchers to his bedside, and said, "Last night, while I lay sleepless, the following stanza came into my mind:—

(38)

Tabi ni yamite

Yume wa kare-no wo

Kake-mawaru

Ta'en ill while journeying, I dreamt
I wandered o'er a withered moor.

"Neither is this a death-bed stanza, nor is it not one. I blame myself for being still attached to my lifelong pursuit of poetry at this moment, when face to face with the great change from life to death."

His state grew more and more critical. On the 27th November, his favourite disciple Kikaku arrived. The interview affected both to tears. Nevertheless, on the next day, Bashō was still able to be moved to laughter by some trivial occurrence which suggested comic verses to one of the party; so they took to composing turn and turn about, in order to amuse him. On the 28th, out of his great love of cleanliness, he insisted on taking a bath, after which he sat up in bed with his chief pupils facing him, and the others, ranged in a row on either side, when one of them took down his last will and testament in writing. He himself penned a letter to his old home, sent verbal messages to various pupils, charged those present to forgive one whom, for a grave offence, they had ostracised from their company, then folding his hands in prayer, recited the Buddhist sutra of the Goddess of Mercy ("*Kwannon Kyō*"), and sank back dead as if asleep. He was buried in the

temple graveyard of Gichūji, by the shores of Lake Biwa, on—as it is specially recorded—a beautiful day in the Indian summer, the 30th November, 1694, over three hundred mourners attending. The catalogue of the possessions which he left behind is recorded too,—one image of Shaka Muni, one copper bowl, one cape, one wooden ink-box, and so on, ending with a few books and scrolls.

Such, sketched in barest outline, was the career of this amiable and accomplished man, whom some students of his life and works might perhaps feel inclined to term the Japanese Wordsworth. Of course it would not do to press the comparison closely. Bashō was not born under the same lucky star as Wordsworth. He inherited a language incomparably inferior as a vehicle for poetry, and was restricted to a single form of verse, and that the poorest. From this cause, if from no other, his poetical performance may no more be ranked with Wordsworth's than Skiddaw may be ranked with Fuji. Nevertheless, he succeeded in regenerating the poetic taste of his day. His knowledge of nature and his sympathy with nature were at least as intimate as Wordsworth's, and his sympathy with all sorts and conditions of men was far more intimate; for he never isolated himself from his kind, but lived cheerfully in the world, though not of the world. Accordingly, his contemporaries received from him a moral no less than a literary influence; he embodied for them the Zen form of Buddhism. This subject—the Zen doctrine and its influence in China and Japan—is one that has never yet been treated as it deserves, and it is impossible here to treat it parenthetically. At least so much will perhaps have been gathered from the foregoing,—that the Zen philosophy, or religion, or whatever it may best be termed, is a system in which the pessimism of original Buddhism is softened by wise concessions to common sense and to the needs and limitations of common life, in which asceticism of the body is exchanged for a sort of mental detachment not inconsistent

with the calls of social intercourse, in which, while the essential vanity of all earthly pursuits is still recognised, some of those which appeal most strongly to the cultivated human mind, namely the various branches of art, are welcomed to an honoured place in the plan of life, because they may be availed of as a means for passing to yet higher spheres of thought and conduct. The word *Zen* is a contraction of the Sanskrit word *dhyāna*, "contemplation." The early votaries of the sect used to pass their time in contemplation or abstraction. Of some it is related that they sat for years gazing at a wall, scarcely even thinking any more, but in a state betwixt rapture and unconsciousness. Experience, however, showed that mankind was not served by such unnatural excesses, and that the cultivation of harmless pursuits was a preferable mental anodyne. Of course they were never meant to be more than an anodyne. They were to be what the Japanese Buddhists term a *hōben*, a word not susceptible of literal translation into English, and which has most erroneously been translated as "pious fraud." The *hōben* is rather a way, a means, an instrument. The parables of the New Testament, for instance, are *hōben*,—stories not literally true, but useful though fictitious, because pointing the way to truth. In its modern form, the Zen creed had become essentially tolerant and cheery. Under its influence such virtues as moderation, contentment, simplicity, kindliness naturally flourished, together with that sobriety and good taste which we have all learnt to admire in the exquisite art of "Old Japan." Its danger was a tendency to degenerate into hedonism. We have already seen that some of its earlier professors studied simplicity less as a virtue than as the easiest road to pleasure, and especially to individual freedom in society as then constituted.

There is a point often incidentally touched on in the preceding pages, which may seem particularly strange to anyone unacquainted with the manner in which the arts

are cultivated in Japan, namely, the great number of disciples who gathered around Bashō, followed him about, tended him. Bashō, in fact, is commonly said to have had three thousand disciples. Another account says one thousand, of whom two hundred principal ones. The names of about one hundred are still familiar to educated persons. Yet he had laboured for two or three decades. Similar phenomena meet us in the careers of other poets before and since, and of professors of various arts. The explanation of this circumstance is rooted in one of the fundamental doctrines of Chinese philosophy, as taught by Confucius and developed more particularly by Mencius,—the doctrine of the essential goodness of human nature. The prominence given to this doctrine leads to an extravagantly high opinion of the value of education; for a mind essentially good will of course require but right training to attain to something very like perfection. Hence also, by analogy, the power attributed to education of working, not moral marvels only, but intellectual. Our Western saying that *Poeta nascitur, non fit* springs from an entirely different mental soil. In China and Japan it is held that every one can become a painter, every one can become a poet, just as every one can learn to read and write and to behave himself. To a certain extent this is true. What renders it doubly true in the Far-East is the absence of real genius,—as we Westerns understand genius,—so that the interval between different degrees of merit is less than with us. In this manner, racial disposition, strengthened by a congenial doctrine and its attendant practice, accounts for the enormous number of persons in these Eastern countries who can paint, poetise, and so on, after a quite respectable fashion. Mediocrity does not displease here, which is fortunate, seeing that the highest excellence is wanting. At the same time, it must be granted that the immense spread of the cultivation of various arts has tended still further to debase the average

standard. Hundreds of so-called epigrams, in particular, call to mind nothing so much as the performance of a poor amateur with a poor kodak.

Fortunately, the very worst performers rarely walk quite alone, the usual plan being for the teacher to touch up his pupils' productions before they are allowed to circulate. For centuries past, in every branch of art, a whole class of professional or semi-professional persons, furnished with diplomas and ranged in a hierarchy of gradually ascending excellence, has made a livelihood by polishing the unskilful efforts of amateurs. As such teachers of the poetic art place particular marks against the words needing emendation or calling for special praise, they are termed "markers" (*tensha*), and many have a bad reputation for avarice and corruption. Bashō was no friend to the "markers." His expression of opinion on the amateurs of his day, given in a letter to a friend, is characteristic. He divides epigrammatists into three classes, namely: I. Those who spend their lives wrangling with professional "markers" over the correctness of their diction. Even these, he remarks with his usual kindness and perhaps a little touch of irony, do better than if they were to give themselves up to evil courses; for their innocent folly helps in any case to support the "marker," his wife, his children, and his landlord. II. Rich men who take up epigram writing as an amusement, caring little whether the "marker" gives them good marks or bad. These resemble children playing at cards. Their time is at least better thus spent than in gossip. Their money and patronage, likewise, not only support the "marker" class, but do really to some extent help forward the cause of true estheticism. III. Those who study poetry genuinely, devote to it all their strength, and employ it as a means to enter on the true "way," that is, on a philosophical and ethical life. Of these last, he concluded, there could scarcely be ten in the whole empire. Evidently

Bashō shared in no delusions as to the innate goodness or cleverness of men in general. But he did his best towards helping as many as possible to be better and to strive after a better esthetic taste, and he wisely abstained from discouraging well-meant effort, however feeble. His philosophy was truly practical,—humanitarian without fuss. He was the mildest, the least revolutionary of reformers.

IV.

In the preliminary studies for this paper, notes were taken for the biography and characterisation of each of the leading epigrammatists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Independence and eccentricity having always been prominent traits of the class, many of these epigrammatists are the subjects of interesting anecdotes. At least one of them, Onitsura, was a truly remarkable man, almost the peer of Bashō himself, whose friend and contemporary he was, though he survived to the year 1738. But the foregoing account of Bashō has run to such lengths that his successors must be dealt with summarily, before passing on to some concluding remarks of a miscellaneous nature.

Bashō's two most eminent disciples—Kikaku and Ransetsu—have already been mentioned. These, with eight more, named respectively Kyorai, Jōsō, Kyoroku, Shikō, Yaha, Kokushi, Etsujin, and Sampū, are known collectively as the *Jit-tetsu*,—a title signifying not exactly the "Ten Sages" nor yet exactly the "Ten Wits," but something between the two. Most of these died early in the eighteenth century. Though none came up to Bashō's standard of moral philosophy, their lives testified in many ways to the effect of his teaching, and many of their epigrams deserve to be placed on a par with his. In fact, these ten men—and notably the first four on the list—seem

often to realise absolute perfection in this particular style, conveying through a mere pin-point of expression a whole picture to the mind. Examples of their compositions will be found at the end of this essay. Kikaku, though too independent and hasty to copy even Bashō, was himself copied by numberless pupils and admirers, forming the *Edo-Za* or "Yedo School," which subsists to the present day. Ransetsu also left a school, named after him the *Setsu-Mon*. Other schools, all traceable to Bashō, but tinged with local peculiarities, arose on the shores of Lake Biwa where the master had spent so many happy days, at Kyōtō, in the provinces of Mino and Owari, at Ise, and in the North, in fact almost all over the Main Island of Japan; and literary history has preserved careful genealogical records of the succession in each, and of their occasional complicated interminglings.

It would seem that at first, that is, during the generation that lived from about 1720 to 1750, a marked decline in the standard of epigrammatic excellence took place. A vulgar variety was evolved, wherein one person composed the first five syllables, another the last twelve. This, which was known as *Kammuri-zuke*, formed the furthest point to which the disintegration of Japanese verse was carried. Sometimes people turned the making of epigrams into a kind of lottery, in which the winner gained a dollar, or they employed it as a vehicle for riddles and for caricatures of proverbs.

A second bloom of the true epigram occurred in the latter part of the eighteenth century, when names meet us not unworthy of comparison with any of those that had adorned an earlier age. Yokoi Yayū, for example, was a born versifier. He went so far as to hold that all children's speech falls naturally into sets of five, seven, and five syllables. Because he himself had "lisp'd in numbers," he assumed that others did the like. In later life, he became still better known as a writer of what is called *Haibun*,

that is, epigrammatic prose, and in society he was idolised as a universal genius, an "admirable Crichton,"—the best bowman, horseman, swordsman of his day. When rebuked by his feudal superior for wasting time on the composition of epigrams, he proved to the latter, by pouring them out extempore, that he wasted no time on them, for the simple reason that they cost him neither thought nor trouble; and he was known throughout his clan as the most loyal of retainers, the most faithful of friends, and—unusual combination—the most economical of householders.

The greatest epigrammatist of the silver age (circa 1770-80) was Buson, the bold painter whose lifelike delineations of tigers and other striking objects adorn some of the Kyōtō temples. It may be said of him, as of Bashō's two greatest pupils, that he carried the art *as art* up to perfection point. His technique is unsurpassed:—he literally paints with words, and how few words! See, for example, Nos. 175, 179, *et seq.*,—each versicle a perfect little cameo, sometimes of beauty, sometimes of humour. The tradition was carried on by Issa (1763—1827), a farmer of Shinshū, noted for eccentricity and childlike simplicity, and for kindness which went so far that he refused even to kill a flea. One of his verses expresses, or rather indicates, the spirit of the Zen teaching more perfectly perhaps than any by other authors:—

(39)

Tsuyu no yo no

Tsuyu no yo nagara

Sari nagara

Granted this dewdrop world is but
A dewdrop world,—this granted, yet.....

that is, "Granted that all phenomena are transitory and valueless, like the dew that forthwith dries up and vanishes, still, when all is said and done, we cannot quite

afford to throw life and its joys away. There is some element of permanence in it yet, though it were hard to define this element precisely."—The words in the original are as pretty as the thought itself is graceful and true.

Some of the foremost epigrammatists were women:—The names of Mitsu-Jo (17th century), her pupil Sono-Jo (died 1726), Chigetsu-ni (died 1706), Shūshiki (died 1725), and above all Kaga-no-Chiyo (died 1775), are known to all students of Japanese poetry. One of Chiyo's most celebrated epigrams has already been given,—that describing the convolvuli which twined about the well. But her preëminent superiority, alike in diction, in nimble-wittedness, and in depth of thought and feeling, claims attention, even where so many famous names have to be passed over in silence. In no other Japanese verse, perhaps, is the sound a more perfect echo to the sense than in the following from her pen. The occasion of it is thus related. A celebrated professor of the art, Rogenbō,* who happened to pass through the remote northern town where she lived as a girl, and who was applied to by her for instruction, gave her the cuckoo as a theme, but was rude enough to pay no heed to her efforts and to fall asleep till dawn. She sat there patiently all night, and when the master at length opened his eyes, greeted him with the following:—

(40)

Hototogisu

Hototogisu tote

Ake ni keri

which made him clap his hands and aver that she needed no teacher, being already passed mistress of the art. Rendered into English, the lines merely mean "Day has dawned to [the sound of] 'cuckoo!' 'cuckoo!'" But the Japanese scholar will realise the mastery necessary to put together those six seemingly simple words.

This poetess's married life was summarised in three epigrams. The first

(41)

Shibukaro ka*
Shiranedo kaki no
Hatsu-chigiri

which was presented by her to her husband on their wedding-day, defies translation into English owing to its terseness. The meaning, however, is clear. The poetess compares her marriage vows to a persimmon. No one can tell whether a persimmon be astringent or not until he bites into it, nor can happiness in wedlock be assured till trial of it has been made. Chiyo had no illusions; but she bore her griefs with fortitude. Her elegy for her husband, who died early, was

(42)

Okite mitsu
Nete mitsu kaya no
Hirosa kana

Whether I lay me down or wake,
 How large seems the mosquito-net!

that is, "The very sight of my widowed couch, when I retire to rest and when I wake again in the morning, reminds me of my loss and of my solitude." But she was to be still further bereft. Perhaps the reader, with his mind now better attuned to the Japanese style, will grasp the sad purport of the last epigram of the three:—

* Short *o* for long *ō* on account of the metre.

(43)

*Tombo-tori***Kyō wa dokora ye**Itta yara*

Where may he have gone off to-day,—
The hunter after dragon-flies?

Her little boy, too, had died, the bright lad who used to run after dragon-flies in the sunshine. To what unknown land has he wandered off?—Surely this tiny composition were almost worthy a place in the Greek Anthology, so true is it to nature, so perfectly simple, and yet saying, or at least indicating, all that can be said so fully that any word added would be superfluous. But to finish this thumb-nail sketch of Chiyo's mind, the humorous side, which in her, as in so many others, jostled the pathetic, claims a moment's notice. When left alone in the world as a woman of a certain age, she made a living by teaching the poetic art, and it is related that her figure became unwieldy. One day, as she was quitting the mansion of a noble personage who had entertained her at dinner, the servant-girls, astonished to find that the pretty name of Chiyo belonged to a fat, plain, middle-aged woman, began tittering in the passage behind her. Instantly the poetess wheeled round, and admonished her pert critics in the following impromptu verse:—

(44)

*Hito-kakae**Aredo yanagi wa**Yanagi kana*

* Another reading gives *Tombo-tsuri*. If we accept it, the second line of the English must run thus, "The fisherman for dragon-flies." Japanese children do, as a matter of fact, often catch these insects with toy lines and hooks.

A willow may an armful be,
But 'tis a willow all the same.

That is, "I may be stout, but I am a lady, and expect to be treated as one,"—the willow-tree, with its slender gracefulness, being symbolical of womanhood.

V

With the generation which passed away about 1780, the art of composing epigrams was gradually lost. The schools which endeavoured to preserve the old manner became fossilised, while out-of-doors the form of the epigram fell into vulgar hands which busied themselves inditing what are termed, from the name of their inventor, *Senryū* (died 1790),—verses which have this in common with the epigram, that they consist of seventeen syllables, but which are vulgar, often even gross, in matter, and equally low in diction. No need to treat here either of them or of a revival—the so-called *Shimpa*—which is in progress in our own day. This last phase cannot well be judged till more of its course shall have been run. Nevertheless, from the specimens to be found in almost every newspaper, the critic will hesitate to attribute to it much importance. It seems rather that all that can be said within the narrow limits set by such Lilliputian versicles, or semi-versicles, has been said long ago, and that we already stand at a sufficient distance of time from the best and most representative epigrammatists to be able to view their productions as a whole.

Notice, in passing, the curious order in which the phases of the Japanese epigram succeeded each other:—first, a frivolous stage; then the appearance of a reformer who put thought and feeling into the empty shell; then a

stage of, so to say, art for art's sake ; lastly, fossilisation. European precedents would have led us to expect a certain sturdy and simple genuineness at the beginning, extravagance at the end. But the epigram is not the only Japanese art which shows the exactly reversed sequence. The tea ceremonies offer another marked instance ; for there, too, luxury and bad taste ran riot at the beginning, followed by Sen-no-Rikyū's reform in the direction of simplicity, and ending in the fossilisation of that simplicity. This peculiarity of the Japanese esthetic development must be left to others to explain. More appropriate to the subject of the present essay is it to enquire :—what is the value of the Japanese epigram as literature ? Doubtless a foreigner unaided might well distrust his ability to answer this question. But the native commentators—such men as Aeba Kōson, one of the leading *littérateurs* of the present day, and Shiki, and Kōyō Sanjin—help us over this difficulty. Not only have they compiled useful anthologies, and written books explaining the actual text of considerable numbers of famous epigrams ; some of their editions indicate the classic sources, both Japanese and Chinese, from which Bashō drew, and thus enable us to appreciate his erudition. One on Buson's epigrams gives the opinions of a whole circle of his modern admirers on most points, while others supply us with biographies, anecdotes, etc., all helping not only to elucidate an enigmatical style, but to fill in the picture of a vanished age.

But while the native commentators are indispensable aids to a comprehension of the subject, it may be doubted whether any European student could bring himself to adopt their estimates. Modern Japanese critics do not intend that their national literature shall yield the palm to that of any other land. Accordingly, they have set themselves to discover Japanese Shakespeares, Japanese Scotts,

Japanese Victor Hugos, etc., etc., etc.* In fact, they are busy turning all their geese into swans, with the help of the technicalities of European art criticism,—the “subjective,” the “objective,” and all the rest of the jargon. They inform us that Bashō’s verse was a mirror reflecting the universe within a frame of seventeen syllables. They discover a criticism of life—the whole Zen philosophy in fact—in that single stanza of his on the old pond and the frog jumping into the water, which has been quoted on page 181; and in the next specimen (by one of the “Ten Wits”) they admire “that absolute transparency and truth to nature which are of the essence of the epigram :”—

(45)

Suzushisa ya
En yori ashi wo
Bura-sageru
 c

Oh ! how cool, dangling one’s legs over the verandah !

Similarly do they judge in countless other cases.

At the same time, and though nothing would be easier than to make fun of the extravagantly laudatory critics, and even of the epigrammatists themselves, to do so would surely prove little but that the foreign investigator’s own critical sense was deficient, but in another direction. For is he not called on to treat his subject sympathetically, or, as Pope puts it, to

“ read each work of wit
 With the same spirit that its author writ ? ”

* These lines had scarcely been penned, when a newspaper appeared announcing, among other interesting items, the death of “the Japanese Rousseau,” Mr. Nakae Tokusuke. As this gentleman was a violent atheist and materialist (his latest work bore the title “Neither God nor Soul”), the nature of his intellectual kinship to the author of “*Le Vicaire Savoyard*” seems problematical. *Ex uno disce omnes.*

And is this not more than ever necessary in the case of any Oriental literary product, because the conditions under which it came into existence differ *toto cælo* from those of our own literature?

The leg-dangling epigram must, of course, be given up, and with it scores and hundreds of "the baser sort,"—trivialities traceable to the unhappy assumption that every one is capable of writing verse. But when the European critic has made all reasonable deductions, when he has eliminated the prosings and the quibbles and the vulgarities of those poetasters whom Japanese tolerance admits to a niche in the national temple of fame, he is yet left with a remnant wherein many tiny prettinesses sparkle. If he cannot here discover intact that mirror reflecting the universe of which the Japanese commentators speak, he does find thousands of fragments of shattered glass, among which some of shattered crystal, each reflecting at a different angle some minute corner of a scene, a brief note of some fact in nature, or maybe an indication of some sentiment or fancy. The Japanese epigram at its best is a loop-hole opened for an instant on some little natural fact, some incident of daily life. It is a momentary flash, a smile half-formed, a sigh suppressed almost before it becomes audible. Take, for instance, Bashō's lines composed on one of Japan's most famous battle-fields, now a desolate moor :—

(46)

Natsu-gusa ya

Tsuwa-mono-domo no

Yume no ato

Haply the summer grasses are
A relic of the warriors' dream.

That is, "Of the warriors' dream of power and glory,
nought remains but the high grasses waving o'er the moor

that is their tomb." Or this other, already quoted at the beginning of the present paper, and which is typical of the art at its highest point of perfection :—

A single river, stretching far
Across the moorland swathed in snow.

Such shorthand verses, if so they may be called, spring from the same mental soil as that on which stand many Japanese artists, who have—not painted, or even sketched,—but hinted at, a flight of birds, a sea-coast, a pine-tree, with but two or three strokes of the brush. The result is not great, perhaps ; but we wonder at the production, with such scanty means, of any result at all ; and we cannot refrain from wishing that the man who performed these feats in little had tried his skill on a larger canvas. Practically, the classical or semi-classical poets of Japan, for over a thousand years past, have confined themselves to pieces of 31 syllables or of 17, whereas even our sonnet, which we look on as a trifle, has 140, and our system of stanzas strung together enables us to continue indefinitely till the whole of a complex train of thought has been brought before the mind. But it may well be that, even had Europe been available as a model, no such sustained style would have had much chance of permanently establishing itself in Japan. When an artist—when whole generations of artists have produced one sort of thing, it must always remain extremely doubtful whether, after all, they could have produced another. The tendency to ultra-brevity is too persistent a characteristic of Japanese esthetics to be accidental in any given case. Remember that there was no want of longer models. Such models were at hand in Chinese poetry ; there were a few, as we have seen, even in the ancient poetry of Japan itself. But somehow these models failed to attract.

Granting, therefore, as a sober judgment forces us to do, that Japanese poems are but slight efforts,—not pearls, but only tiny beads,—a critical estimate of Bashō and of

the Japanese epigrammatists generally, reduces itself to two points :—I. What is each individual tiny bead worth? and II. Are there enough of these beads, and are they varied enough, to make up a valuable sum total? The foregoing essay will, it is hoped, have put the reader in the way of forming his own opinion on both these issues. Possibly he may deem that the nearest English analogues of the molecules of description, fancy, or morality left us by the best Japanese epigrammatists are such Tennysonian half-stanzas as

“A single church below the hill
Is pealing, folded in the mist.”

“The last red leaf is whirl'd away,
The rooks are blown about the skies.”

“But in my spirit will I dwell,
And dream my dream, and hold it true.”

The difference between the two cases—and doubtless it is a vital difference—lies in this, that the Japanese production is isolated, fragmentary, whereas the European forms part of a grand organic whole. On the one side, “In Memoriam” and whole “Palaces of Art;” on the other, a litter of single bricks, half-bricks in fact. The investigator of Japanese literature, for all that his task is so arduous, has not the satisfaction to be rewarded by the unearthing of any sublime or epoch-making monuments. He must take sundry small finds, and be thankful. He is in the position of a botanist whose specialty should be mosses or lichens, and who therefore could not hope to delight either himself or the public with any grand discoveries in the way of new flowers or fruits. Still, a careful monograph on a new moss would possess a certain interest and value. The interest of such an enquiry as that here undertaken lies in the fact that, of all the divisions of Japanese poetry, the epigram is the most thoroughly popular, national, therefore characteristic. By the investigator of the Japanese

mind it can be studied almost as the subject-matter of a natural science can be studied, and it yields as its result a picture of the national character. We see this character at work while it is, so to say, at play:—we see it ingenious, witty, good-natured, much addicted to punning and to tomfoolery; we see it fanciful but not imaginative, clever but not profound; we see it joking on the gravest subjects; we see it taking life easily and trifles seriously; we see its minute observation of detail, its endless patience in accumulating materials, together with its incapacity for building with them; we see its knack for hinting rather than describing,—a knack which, when it becomes self-conscious, degenerates into a trick and is often carried past the limit of obscurity, not to say absurdity, as when a so-called drawing is so sketchy that the beholder cannot, with the best will in the world, tell whether what he is invited to look at be a rock or a bit of pine-bark. We see likewise the essentially democratic spirit of the nation, no less in the pell-mell choice or no choice of subjects, than in the manner in which all classes joined in the fun. We see that comparative weakness of the feeling for colour which characterises Japanese art reappearing here as a want of feeling for rhyme and rhythm and stanzaic arrangement, for all, in fact, that goes to make up the colour of verse. Lastly,—and some may deem this the most curious feature of all,—we find a way of looking at nature which recalls the method of our own modern water-colour artists, and which thus constitutes a point of likeness and sympathy between ourselves and a vanished Japanese world of long ago. What, for instance, could be more modern than this vignette of Bashō's?—

(47)

*Tombō ya**Tori-tsuki-kaneshi**Kusa no ue*

A stem of grass, whereon in vain
A dragon-fly essayed to light!

Anyone strolling along a country lane at the proper season may verify for himself this minute fact in natural history, as some grass-stalks are too slender to afford foothold even to a dragon-fly. May not the Japanese epigram itself remind us of these frail objects? It appears, now as a tiny herb or flower on our path, now as some brilliant insect which hovers for a moment, and, ere we have well noticed it, flits away out of sight and memory.

ADDITIONAL SELECT EPIGRAMS.

In order to put the reader in touch with native taste, the choice of all the epigrams quoted in the present essay has been guided by native standards, such being preferred as have gained the admiration of the Japanese themselves. The translation aims, not only at being literal, but at preserving the spirit of each original,—poetical where it is poetical, prosaic (e.g. No. 61) where it is prosaic. The different poets are placed, as far as possible, in chronological order. The numerous specimens of Bashō's work are likewise so arranged.

EARLY EPIGRAMMATISTS.

(48)

Yo ni furu wa
Sara ni shigure no
Yadori kana

(Sōgi, 1421-1502)

Ah! yes, my passage through the world
Is a mere shelter from a shower.

The poet's death song. He compares brief human life to a momentary shelter. *Furu* contains a pun on "passing through" (the world) and "raining."

(49)

Tsuki ni e wo
Sashitaraba yoki
Uchiwa kana

(Sōkan, 1465-1554)

Add but a handle to the moon,
And what a pretty fan it makes!

(50)

Cha no mizu no
Ware to futa suru
Kōri kana

(Sōkan)

Behold the water for the tea
Make for itself a lid of ice!

(51)

Rakkwa eda ni
Kaeru to mireba
Kochō kana

(Arakida Moritake, 1472-1549)

Fall'n flow'r returning to the branch,—
 Behold! it is a butterfly.

I.e. For a moment I fancied it to be a fallen petal flying back,
 by some miracle, to its native branch. But lo! it was a butterfly.

(52)

Samidare ni
Hi no ame majiru
Hotaru kana

(Arakida Moritake)

Oh! fireflies, what a fiery rain
 Commingling with the summer shower!

(53)

Asagao ni
Kyō wa miyuran
Waga yo kana

(Arakida Moritake)

Ah! yes, as a convolvulus
 To-day my lifetime will appear.

The poet's death song. Life is fleeting as the convolvulus,
 which blooms in the morning (*asa*) only to wither at eve. What
 the translation renders by "my lifetime" is literally "my world."

(54)

Kaze kezuru
Yanagi ya kishi no
Hitai-gami

(Arakida Moritake)

The willows which the breezes comb,
 Are they the forelock of the bank?

The poet likens the catkins of the willow to a lady's tresses, and the wind to a comb. The "bank" is the bank of the river on which the willow-trees are growing. The modern critic Aeba Kōson considers this artificial verse highly characteristic of its composer.

(55)

*Chi-nomi-ko ni**Yo wo watashitaru**Shiwasu kana*

(Shōhaku, 1444-1527)

Oh ! the December in which the heritage is handed on
to a suckling !

This is a lament on the death of a man poor and in difficulties who has left an infant heir. The end of the year is the season when debts and bills must be paid, and when poverty consequently presses hardest.

(56)

*Nakazareba**Koroshite shimae**Hototogisu*

Nobunaga.

The cuckoo,—kill it, if it sing not.

(57)

*Nakazareba**Nakashite mishō**Hototogisu*

Hideyoshi.

The cuckoo,—I will show it how to sing, if it sing not.

(58)

*Nakazareba**Naku made matō**Hototogisu*

Ieyasu.

The cuckoo,—I will wait till it sings, if it sing not.

These three epigrams, which have passed into household words, are not specially well-written, neither are they the composition of the three celebrated rulers whose names they bear. They are sometimes attributed to Shōha, an epigrammatist who died in the year 1600, and who meant to paint, each with a single graphic touch, the characters of the three heroes of his day,—Nobunaga, impetuous and cruel; Hideyoshi, clever; Ieyasu, patient, because well-knowing that, as we say, "All comes to him who waits." The empire came to him, and remained in the hands of his descendants for over two and a half centuries.

(59)

*Haru tatsu ya**Ni-hon medetaki**Kado no matsu*

When spring comes, the two pine-trees [stand] by the gate for luck.

(Saitō Tokugen, circa A.D. 1640.)

Or—for *ni-hon* contains a pun, (二本 and 日本)—"When spring comes, the pine-trees by the gate bring luck to Japan,"—an allusion to the customary New Year decorations.

(60)

*Manzai ya**Mau mo utau mo**Yoku no koto*

(Baisei, 1611-1699)

Even the morris-dancers' steps
And songs spring from cupidity.

The desire for money rules all things, even what superficially looks like innocent mirth.

(61)

*Masa-masa to**Imasu ga gotoshi**Tama-matsuri*

(Kitamura Kigin, 1624-1711)

Serving the spirits of the dead
Exactly as if they were living.

These words are transcribed almost literally from a maxim in the "Confucian Analects."

(62)

Naku ni sae
Warawaba ikani
Hototogisu

(Mitsu-Jo, 1572-1647)

[So lovely] even in its cry,—
 What were the cuckoo if it laughed?

Japanese, like English, employs the same word (*naku*, "to cry") for weeping and for the sounds uttered by birds and some other animals. Crying disfigures the countenance. If, then, the cuckoo enchants us even when it cries, what would not be the beauty of its smile or its laughter? A good example this of the conceits in which the epigrammatists before Bashō's reform took such delight.

(63)

Chō karoshi
Koro wa kiru mono
Hitotsu kana

(Koshun, 1650-1697)

Light goes the butterfly, what time
 A single robe is all we don.

(64)

Yo no akete
Hana ni hiraku ya
Jōdo-mon

(Seibu, 1606-1678)

The daylight dawns, and, like a flower,
 Open the gates of Paradise.

The poet's death song. *Jōdo*, literally, "the Pure Land," is one of the Buddhist heavens, fabled to exist in the West.

(65)

*Tsuki hana no**San-ku-me wo ima**Shiru yo kana*

(Rippo, 1600-1669)

The moon, the flow'rs, ah ! now's the time
To learn the third name of the set.

The poet's death song. He alludes to the esthetic triad *tsuki hana yuki*, "the moon, the blossoms, and the snow," which are esteemed the loveliest things in nature. *Yuki*, "snow," however, is homonymous with *yuki*, "going," here taken in the sense of "dying":—it is not the snow, but death, which now comes to complete his experiences.

(66)

*Oranda no**Moji ga yokotau**Ama tsu kari*

(Nishiyama Sōin, 1605-1682)

The wild-geese in the firmament,—
These are Dutch letters sideways stretching.

The flight of the wild-geese athwart the sky suggests to the epigrammatist that outlandish method of communication practised by Europeans, who write across the page instead of up and down it, as the Chinese and Japanese consider natural. In those days any scrap of European writing would be the greatest rarity at the Japanese capital, and the mention of it in verse a daring novelty.

(67)

*Yo no naka ya**Chōchō tomare**Kaku mo are*

(Nishiyama Sōin)

Impossible to translate, owing to the punning insertion of two words which have no direct relation to the sense of the rest of the verse. The gist is: "The world is just what it is. It is an uncertain quantity. Don't take it—that is, don't take life—too

seriously." Written across this principal assertion, as it were, are the words *Chôchô tomare*, "Butterfly, alight!" Besides adding the ornament of a pun, this graceful image helps to reinforce the assertion of the flimsy, flighty character of human life.

(68)

Shira-tsuyu ya . .
Mu-fumbetsu naru
Oki-dokoro

(Nishiyama Sôin)

Lacking in all discernment as
 To where they light are the white dew.

This is considered one of the best compositions of the leader of the Danrin school. His admiration of nature is conveyed in the form of sportive blame:—instead of seeking out beautiful places, the dew shows so little discretion as to fall everywhere alike.

(69)

Natsu-yase to
Kotaete shinobu
Namida kana

(Nishiyama Sôin?)

Alas! the tears which she restrains,
 Saying the heat has made her thin.

Hiding grief under a pretence of illness. This epigram has passed into a proverb.

(70)

Kaya-bara-ni
Oshi ya sute-oku
Tsuyu no tama

(Sute-Jo, 1635-1698)

Pity the dewy pearl be thrown
 Away upon the grassy moor!

The poetess Sute-Jo was born at Kayabara (the name means "grassy moor") in Tamba, where the Daimyô of the province visited her and composed this complimentary epigram, which includes puns on her name and the name of her birthplace. Over thirty of Sute-Jo's friends—all nuns—used to follow her about in her wanderings.

(71)

*Yuki no asa**Ni no ji ni no ji no**Geta no ato*

(Sute-Jo)

A snowy morning,—everywhere
The figure “2” left by the clogs.

This epigram—a perfect specimen in its way—was composed by the poetess at the early age of six. Every resident in Japan has seen snow or mud or sand thus marked with the Chinese numeral 二 “two,” by the two underpieces of wood that support the clogs which are the commonest footgear among the townfolk of this country.

(72)

*Kado-matsu ya**Meido no tabi no**Ichi-ri-zuka*

c (Raizan, 1654-1716)

Literally, “The pine-trees by the gate [which are set up as New Year decorations] are mile-stones on the journey to the nether world.”—Some one added the following second hemistich:

*Medetaku mo ari**Medetaku mo nashi*

i.e. “they are both lucky and unlucky,”—a lucky omen on account of their connection with the New Year rejoicings, an unlucky one because of their marking a stage on the way to death. The lines are popularly thus quoted as a thirty-one syllable verse, and are erroneously ascribed to the priest Ikkyū Oshō.

(73)

*Ike nurumu**Koro to ya uwo no**Atama-domo*

The season when the pond grows warm,
To judge from all the fishes' heads.

A panting summer's day, with the fishes' heads at the surface of the water, gasping for breath.

BASHŌ AND HIS SCHOOL.

(74)

Toshi kurenu

Kasa kite waraji

Haki-nagara

(Bashō, 1644-1694)

The year has closed while still I wear
My sandals and my pilgrim's hat.

Written on one of his many pilgrimages.

(75)

Yama-ji kite

Nani yori yukashi

Sumire-gusa

(Bashō)

Coming this mountain way, no herb
Is lovelier than the violet.

The Japanese violet, which possesses no fragrance, is "the meanest flower that blows." Bashō evinces his love of lowly natural objects by singling it out for mention. According to one commentator, however, the lines are metaphorical:—Bashō having, to his joy, met a Buddhist anchorite in the depths of the forest, compares him to the violet which shuns the sunlight.

(76)

Yoku mireba

Nazuna hana saku

Kakine kana

(Bashō)

On looking carefully, behold
The caseweed flowering near the fence!

Another example of his appreciation of humble natural objects.

(77)

Iza saraba
Yuki-mi ni korobu
Tokoro made

(Bashō)

Well then, we'll off to see the snow,
 Far as we can without a tumble.

(78)

Hebi kuu to
Kikeba osoroshi
Kiji no koe

(Bashō)

When told that it will snakes devour,
 How frightful is the pheasant's voice!

This epigram has become proverbial for beauty marred by misconduct.

(79)

Oki-yo oki-yo
Waga tomo ni sen
Nuru kochō

(Bashō)

Awake! awake! I'll make of thee
 My comrade, sleeping butterfly.

(80)

Yagate shinu
Keshiki wa miezu
Semi no koe

(Bashō)

Nothing in the cicada's voice
 Gives token of a speedy death.

This was Bashō's parting word to one who visited him in his hut by Lake Biwa. The implied meaning seems to be that human life is short and uncertain, despite present joy in scenes of beauty.

(81)

*Tako-tsubo ya**Hakanaki yume wo**Natsu no tsuki*

(Bashō)

As literally as a play upon words will permit (*natsu*, "summer," from which *nasu*, "to do," is mentally supplied), this may be rendered, "Octopus pot, aye! and a brief dream while the summer moon [is shining]." The octopus pot is an earthenware vessel with a large opening, which is sunk in the sea. The octopus, deeming it a quiet retreat, crawls inside it, and is thus easily drawn up and caught. The creature's dream of happiness is short. How dreamy, too, is its whole scarcely conscious existence! Equally brief were the dream of one who should fall asleep on a moonlit night in summer, when the nights are at their shortest. There is an implied comparison with the evanescence of human life:—man himself is like a moonbeam, like a fleeting dream, like a creature only half-conscious.

(82)

*Omoshirōte**Yagate kanashiki**U-bune kana*

(Bashō)

Oh! cormorant fishing-boat so gay,

And then again so melancholy!

The cormorants start off gaily; but their mirth is changed to melancholy when the fish they have caught are forced from them by the fishermen who hold them in leash. This was composed in 1688, on passing through Gifu, which is still the locality where the curious method of fishing with the aid of tame cormorants may best be witnessed. See "Things Japanese," s.v. "Cormorant Fishing."

(83)

*Uki ware wo**Sabishigarase yo**Kanko-dori*

(Bashō)

Cuckoo! for melancholy me

Oh! make still deeper loneliness.

Composed on a rainy day in early summer, while Bashō was staying at Saga near Kyōto, in the house of one of his favourite disciples. What he means to express is his love of a *gentle* melancholy, and of leisure for communing with nature not intruded on by even his best-loved friends.

(84)

Ara-umi ya
Sado ni yokotau
Ama-no-gawa

(Bashō)

A rough sea, and the Milky Way
 Stretching across to Sado's isle.

Composed on the coast opposite Sado one starry night, when the waves were running high and the loneliness of his pilgrimage oppressed his spirit.

(85)

Hiya-hiya to
Kabe wo fumaete
Hiru-ne kana

(Bashō)

Oh! those siestas, with my feet
 Pressed fearsomely against the wall!

This verse and the next illustrate the poverty and simplicity of Bashō's mode of life. So fragile is the mud wall of his hut that he fears to break through it when pressing against it with his feet.

(86)

Ik-ka mina
Tsue ni shiraga no
Haka-mairi

(Bashō)

The household at the graves assembled,
 White-haired, and leaning on their staves.

To visit the graves of ancestors at stated intervals is an act of piety prescribed by immemorial custom. We here see a whole family of aged persons assembled to do honour to those whom they themselves will soon follow to the other world. The picture is more solemn than any other that Bashō has left us.

(87)

Kumo ori-ori
Hito wo yāsumeru
Tsuki-mi kana

(Bashō)

Oh ! the moon-gazing where some clouds
 From time to time repose the eye !

Even beauty is best appreciated when occasionally veiled.

(88)

Meigetsu ni
Hana ka to miete
Wata-batake

(Bashō)

In the bright moonlight what appeared
 Like flowers is a cotton field.

What he took for a grove of lovely cherry-blossom is but a common cotton plantation after all. Unpoetical as the fact is, he states it because it is a fact.

(89)

Yasu-yasu to
Idete izayou
Tsuki no kumo

(Bashō)

Oh ! clouds about the moon, from whence
 She falters forth so debonnair !

(90)

Nagaki hi wo
Saezuri-taranu
Hibari kana

(Bashō)

Oh ! skylark for whose carolling
 The livelong day sufficeth not !

(91)

Hototogisu
Koe yokotau ya
Mizu no ue

(Bashō)

Athwart the surface of the stream
 There lieth stretched the cuckoo's voice.

The first redaction of this epigram was *Hito-koe no—E* (江)
ni yokotau ya—Hototogisu. The translation is founded on both.

(92)

Hi no michi ya
Aoi katamuku
Satsuki-ame

(Bashō)

A rainy day in June, and yet
 The sunflow'r bends to the sun's course.

(93)

Tsuku kane no
Hibiku yō nari
Semi no koe

(Bashō)

Like to the booming of a bell
 When struck, is the cicadæ's voice.

(94)

Mizu-abura
Nakute neru yo ya .
Mado no tsuki

(Bashō)

As, lacking oil, I lie abed
 At night, the moon my window lights.

(95)

Kokono-tabi
Okite mo tsuki no
Nanatsu kana

(Bashō)

Despite that I have nine times risen,
 'Tis but the fourth hour by the moon.

In Japanese, the "seventh" hour, their seven o'clock (old style) corresponding approximately to our 4 A.M. (see "Things Japanese," s. v. "Time"). The poet has risen repeatedly to gaze at the beauteous moon, but still the dawn comes not.

(96)

Mugi-meshi ni
Yatsururu koi ka
Neko no tsuma

(Bashō)

Is it hard fare, or is it love
 That makes the cat's goodwife so lean ?

The term *mugi-meshi*, here translated "hard fare," in order the better to indicate the sense of the verse, is literally "rice mixed with barley." This dish is considered poor eating as compared with rice pure and simple, and is therefore often resorted to by the lower classes for economy's sake,

(97)

Momiji ni wa
Taga oshie-keru
Sake no kan

(Kikaku, 1661-1707)

Who was it taught the maple-leaves
 To heat the liquor in the bottle?

The allusion is to an old Chinese story—acted in another form on the Japanese stage—in which a fire is made of maple-leaves or twigs, to heat the *sake* for a carousal. It is related of this poet that at poetry meetings he was often drowsy from drink, but would wake suddenly and compose better verses than any of his competitors.

(98)

Ume ga ka ya
Tonari wa Ogyū
Sōemon

(Kikaku)

This more resembles an epigram, in the colloquial sense of that term, than any other of the Japanese "epigrams" quoted in the present collection. Kikaku, though afterwards famous as one of the "Ten Wits," was a mere lad when he composed it. He happened to live next door to no less a personage than the Confucianist Ogyū Sorai (Sōemon), the Dr. Johnson of his age and country. Most dwellers in a land where the proprieties, and above all erudition, were so highly honoured, would have trembled in his presence. Kikaku merely indited the above impertinent verse, which says that "The perfume of the plum-blossom (i.e. estheticism, as represented by himself) has for its neighbour one Ogyū Sōemon." The poetical diction of the first line, and the flat prose of the rest form a witty, but untranslatable, contrast.

(99)

Yari-kurete
Mata ya samushiro
Toshi no kure

(Kikaku)

For all my contriving, here I am again at the end of
the year with [nothing but] my strip of matting.

This poet's wild Bohemian life often caused him to be out-at-
elbows.

(100)

Kiraretaru

Yume wa makoto ka

Nomi no ato

(Kikaku)

Is my dream true? Am I cut down?
Or was I bitten by a flea?

(101)

Nikumarete

Nagarōru hito

Fuyu no hai

(Kikaku)

A man who is disliked, and who
Lives to old age,—a winter fly.

Disagreeable folks live longest.

(102)

Yū-suzumi

Yoku zo otoko ni

Umare-keru

(Kikaku)

Taking the cool at eve, I do
Rejoice that I was born a man.

Because men are—and more especially were in Old Japan—
allowed much greater freedom in the matter of *négligé* garments
than is permitted to the other sex.

(103)

*Gwanjitsu ya**Harete suzume no**Mono-gatari*

(Ransetsu, 1654-1707)

Aye! New Year's day, with a clear sky,
And conversation among the sparrows!

Bashō declared that, as an epigram for New Year's day, this could not be improved upon, and modern critics endorse his judgment. Remember that the Japanese New Year, till the reform of the calendar in 1873, generally fell about the middle of February, when spring is really in view. We in England place the birds' wedding on St. Valentine's Day, 14th February.

(104)

*Ume ichi-rin**Ich-rin hodo no**Atatakasa*

(Ransetsu)

[Slowly] it mildens, as the plum
[Ventureth forth,] blossom by blossom.

The plum-blossom is the earliest of all the flowers of spring, coming out, in fact, while the snow is still on the ground.—For *hodo*, some read *zutsu*.

(105)

*Hana ni kaze**Karoku kile fuke**Sake no awa*

(Ransetsu)

Come, breeze, and lightly blow upon
The flowers,—bubbles in the wine!

Apparently the poet's request to the zephyr is that it shall at the same time gently move the blossoms so as to spread their fragrance, and waft to the other side of the cup the bubbles of the wine which he is drinking.

(106)

Hyaku-giku soroe-keru ni :

On a chrysanthemum show (literally, on a hundred
chrysanthemums assembled).

Ki-giku shira-giku
Sono hoka no na wa
Naku mogana

(Ransetsu)

Yellow chrysanthemums, white chrysanthemums ;—
Would there were no more names than these !

This verse, though irregular in metre, is considered a perfect specimen of the epigrammatic style. Japanese gardeners, like our own, bestow some fanciful name on every artificial variety of flower produced by their art. The poet, impatient of these, wishes that there should be no other names—perhaps no other flowers—than the natural white and yellow.

(107)

Kiku sakeri
Chō kite asobe
Enogu-zara

(Ransetsu)

The asters bloom. Come butterflies,
And dally o'er the colour dish !

The exigencies of metre must be our excuse for writing "asters" instead of "chrysanthemums." These flowers are here likened to a painter's palette.

(108)

Junrei ni
Uchi-majiri-yuku
Ki-gan kana

(Ransetsu)

Behold the wild-geese wending homeward,
Mingled with the pilgrim bands !

A picture of two simultaneous processions,—the homeward-bound pilgrims on solid earth, and the wild-geese in the sky above them. The flights of wild-geese—northward in spring, southward in autumn—are among the most characteristic sights of the Japanese landscape.

(109)

*Omoshirō**Fuji ni sujikau**Hana-no kana*

(Ransetsu)

Oh ! flowery moor, stretching athwart
Mount Fuji's slope so pleasantly !

The luxuriance of the wild-flowers on Fuji's lower slope—especially on the western and southern sides—in the month of August, is astonishing.

(110)

*Shiri-bito ni**Awaji awaji to**Hana-mi kana*

(Kyorai, 1651-1704)

No friends, oh ! let me meet no friends
When I am gazing at the flowers !

(111)

*Nani-goto zo**Hana miru hito no**Naga-gatana*

(Kyorai)

A sabre ! what has such to do
On one who comes to view the flowers ?

Because esthetics and war agree ill together.

(112)

Kokoro naki
Daikwanjo ya
Hototogisu

(Kyorai)

The heartless Government Office,—ay ! and the cuckoo.
 A humorous juxtaposition of incongruities.

(113)

Isogashi ya
Oki no shigure no
Ma-ho kata-ho

(Kyorai)

What haste ! a shower in the offing,
 And sails set straight, and sails set slant.

A vignette of a fleet of junks caught in a sudden squall. The sailors are shown running hither and thither, and trimming the sails, now to set their craft running before the wind, and anon to put her on the port or starboard tack.

(114)

Tsuki-mi sen
Fushimi no shiro no
Sute-guruwa

(Kyorai)

I will contemplate from Fushimi's
 Abandoned castle-grounds the moon.

Fushimi near Kyōto was the site of Hideyoshi's great castle palace of Momoyama, the most splendid edifice ever reared on Japanese soil. It was given over to the flames soon after its builder's death.

(115)

Yū-gure ya
Hage-narabitaru
Kumo no mine

(Kyorai)

'Tis evening, and in serried file
 Stand the bare pinnacles of cloud.

(116)

Uki tomo ni
Kamarete neko no
Sora nagame

(Kyorai)

Bit by a sorry mate, the cat
 Intently gazes at the sky.

Crossed in love, the tom-cat gazes sentimentally at the firmament.

(117)

Iku-tari ka
Shigure kake-nuku
Seta no hashi

(Jōsō, 1663-1704)

How many may be hurrying through
 The drizzle on the Bridge of Seta ?

The immensely long Bridge of Seta, near Lake Biwa, is a favourite theme with the poets and artists of Japan. Here its length is suggested by the mention of a countless multitude.

(118)

No mo yama mo
Yuki ni torarete
Nani mo nashi

(Jōsō)

Nothing remaineth ; for the snow
 Hath blotted out both moor and hill.

(119)

Kitsutsuki no
Kare-ki sagasu ya
Hana no naka

(Jōsō)

What ! mid the flowers the woodpecker
 Is seeking out a withered tree.

Highly unesthetic of the bird to neglect the blossoms and prefer a withered trunk.

(120)

Nuke-gara ni
Narabite shinuru
Aki no semi

(Jōsō)

In autumn a cicada dead
 Beside the shell that it cast off.

Autumn, a cicada's cast-off shell, even the cicada itself dead,—
 a set of dreary images typical of the nothingness of human fate.

(121)

Mina-soko no
Iwa ni ochi-tsuku
Ko no ha kana

(Jōsō)

Behold the leaf that sinks and clings
 Below the water to a rock!

The observation of a tiny fact in nature. So is the next; for
 any careful eye will have noted the amusingly knowing look on the
 face of a duck when raising its head after a dive.

(122)

Mina-soko wo
Mite kita kao no
Ko-gamo kana

(Jōsō)

The teal, with face fresh from the sight
 Of what below the water lies.

(123)

Kyū no ten
Hinu ma mo samushi
Haru no kaze

(Kyoroku, died 1715)

Literally, "Cold, too, is the interval before the moxa
 dots dry,—spring breeze."

This verse is here quoted because it refers to a curious custom, for which see "Things Japanese," s.v. "Moxa," adding to the account there given the following particulars:—The usual plan is for the patients to disrobe to the waist, before the chief practitioner—often a Buddhist priest, as the scene, too, is often a Buddhist temple—marks in sepia on their persons the spots that are to be treated. They then remove to another apartment, round which they squat in a line, while the priest's disciple or acolyte goes from one to another applying the cautery to each in turn, one dot at a time, so that if a patient has several spots to be burnt, there is at least an interval between the steps of his torture. It is of course a chilly process from beginning to end, as the patient has to sit half-naked.

(124)

*Kata-eda ni**Myaku ya kayoite**Ume no hana*

(Shikō, 1665-1731)

Plum-blossoms! is it that the sap
Still courses through that single branch?

The subject of this epigram was doubtless a plum-tree, all whose branches save one were dead.

(125)

*Shira-kumo ya**Kakine wo wataru**Yuri no hana*

(Shikō)

Oh! the white clouds! nay, rather blossoms,—
Lilies that bend across the fence.

The poet likens his neighbour's lilies to white clouds.

(126)

*Uki koi ni**Taete ya neko no**Nusumi-gui*

(Shikō)

Weary perhaps of dolorous love,
The cat has stol'n a bit to eat.

(127)

Neko no koi
Shote kara naite
Aware nari

(Yaha, 1663-1740)

A cat's amours :—from the beginning
He caterwauls ; he's to be pitied.

(128)

Chōmatsu ga
Oya no na de kuru
Gyokei kana

(Yaha)

Lo ! Johnny, in his father's name,
Come to present congratulations !

Namely, on New Year's day. Aeba Kōson singles out this verse for praise. It pictures to us the self-importance of the little fellow, dressed in his best and charged with so ceremonious a mission.

(129)

Haki-sōji
Shite kara tsubaki
Chiri ni keri

(Yaha)

After I've swept and tidied up,
Adown fall some camellias.

He has been getting his villa ready for a poetry meeting ; but when all seemed finished, some camellias suddenly tumble from their stalks on to the garden path, and make the place look untidy. This peculiarity of the camellia is referred to by several poets ;—for instance in No. 169.

(130)

Uguisu ya
Kado wa tama-tama
Tōfu-uri

(Yaha)

The nightingale and, at the gate,
 The unexpected bean-curd vendor.

The advent of the petty tradesman just as the nightingale is singing makes a humorous contrast.

(131)

Yuku kumo wo
Nete ite miru ya
Natsu-zashiki

(Yaha)

A summer room where, lying down,
 I see the clouds as they go past.

The poet, taking his siesta on a July afternoon, watches the clouds float lazily across the sky.

(132)

Yake ni keri
Saredomo hana wa
Chiri-sumashi

(Hokushi, died 1718.)

I am burnt out. Nevertheless,
 The flow'rs have duly bloom'd and faded.

The first line of the English rendering is absolutely literal, including the prosaic word "nevertheless." The words corresponding to the second line say literally no more than that "The flowers have fallen unconcernedly;" but the sense is as here given. The story goes that Hokushi's house having been burnt down one day, his friends flocked to present their condolence. But he, like a true Bohemian, only laughed, and sent them away with this epigram. Its gist is that so trifling a matter, which did not interfere with the course of nature, was not worth a second thought.

(133)

Meigetsu ya
Yo akuru kiwa mo
Nakari-keri

(Etsujin, dates uncertain.)

A brilliant moon ! there was no marge
 Betwixt it and the dawn of day.

On such nights, the brightness of moonlight passes into the
 brightness of sunlight without our being able to tell where night
 ends and day begins.

(134)

Ame no tsuki
Doko to mo nashi ni
Usu-akari

(Etsujin)

A rainy moon, and everywhere
 Alike a faint irradiation.

The poet's theme is that universal pale light, coming none can
 tell whence, which suffuses the sky on a night which ought to be
 moonlit, but is rainy.

(135)

Yama-dera ni
Kome tsuku oto no
Tsuki-yo kana

(Etsujin)

Oh ! moonlight, with the sound of rice
 A-pounding in the mountain temple !

Moonlight nights are often availed of by thrifty householders
 for pounding rice.

(136)

Eri-maki ni
Kubi hiki-irete
Fuyu no tsuki

(Sugiyama Sampū, 1648-1733)

Moonlight in winter, and I draw
My neck within my comforter.

The substitution of this homely detail for the conventional raptures on the moon produces a humorous effect.

(137)

Ko ya matan
Amari hibari no
Taka-agari

(Sugiyama Sampū)

Oh! how its young ones must be waiting,—
For all too high ascends the lark!

(138)

Shigure-keri
Hashiri-iri-keri
Hare ni keri

(Izembō, died 1710.)

A shower came, and so I came
Running indoors; then blue sky came.

Born rich, this poet despised wealth, and spent his time strolling about in tattered peasant's garb, reciting verses. His diction was eccentric too, specially affecting the repetition of some single word.

(139)

Omotasa no
Yuki haraedomo
Haraedomo

(Izembō)

Oh! what a heavy weight of snow,
Sweep as you may, sweep as you may!

These words are not to be taken literally. The poet sent them to his daughter as an epigram on worldly vanities.

(140)

*Kami-sori ya**Ichī-ya ni sabite**Satsuki-ame*

(Hanchō, dates uncertain.)

My razor, in a single night,
Is rusted by the rains of June.

(141)

*Yo no naka wa**Sekirei no o no**Hima mo nashi*

(Hanchō)

The movement of the world of men
Is ceaseless as the wagtail's tail.

The bad assonance of "wagtail's tail" does not disfigure the original Japanese.

(142)

*Iza sakura**Omoi-tatsu hi wa**Kumoru to mo*

(Ryōto, 1660-1717)

Off to the cherry-flow'rs! the day
Was fix'd;—and what, though it be cloudy?

(143)

*Waga nari mo**Aware ni miyuru**Kare-no kana*

(Chigetsu-ni, 1634-1706)

Alas! the withered moor, whereon
My figure, too, looks pitiful.

This poetess had become a nun after her husband's death:—hence the comparison between the desolate autumn moor and her own poor garb. Both she and her son Oshū were pupils of Bashō. They belonged to the Lake Biwa school properly so-called, being born at Ōtsu on its shores.

(144)

Mugi-wara no
Ie shite yaran
Ama-gaeru

(Chigetsu-ni)

I'll take some barley straw and make
 A house for you, little green frog!

"Green frog" is in Japanese literally, "nun frog," so that the bond between the poetess and her *protégé* was one of name as well as of kindness.

(145)

Kore de koso
Inochi oshikere
Sakura-bana

(Chigetsu-ni)

The cherry-flow'rs! for them alone
 Is it that life is dear to me.

(146)

Umi yama no
Tori naki-tatsuru
Fubuki kana

(Chigetsu-ni)

Oh! snowstorm, at whose blast the birds
 Begin to cry o'er sea and hill!

(147)

Nen itte
Fuyu kara tsubomu
Tsubaki kana

(Kyokusui, died 1720.)

How carefully begin to bud
 In winter the camellia-trees!

The buds of the camellia are singularly long in forming.

(148)

Yūdachi ya
Chie sama-zama no
Kaburi-mono

(Otsuyū, died 1739.)

A show'r, and skill of every sort
 In things to put upon the head.

A vignette of people caught in the rain:—one bethinks him perhaps of his fan, another shelters his head with his long pendent sleeve, etc., etc. This verse, familiar to all Japanese, excellently illustrates the light but graphic touch proper to the epigram.

(149)

Hate wa mina
Ogi no hone ya
Aki no kaze

(Otsuyū)

All come at last to be a fan's
 Old sticks when blows the autumn breeze.

We all grow old, as a fan does, which is in constant request during the summer heat, but gets torn and is reduced to little but its sticks by the time the autumn breeze begins to blow. The Japanese talk, not of the "sticks," but of the "bones" of a fan, which makes the comparison of a lean old man to a dilapidated fan still more natural.

(150)

Nani tori no
Kono ato naku zo
Hototogisu

(Otsuyū)

He was the cuckoo. Say what other
 Bird may sing now he is gone.

Such is the sense, though, literally translated, the words are only, "What bird will sing indeed after this?—cuckoo!" This was

an elegy on the poet Ryōto, head of the Ise school. It was considered so beautiful, that the headship of the school was forthwith bestowed upon its composer.

(151)

Mikazuki ni

Fuka no atama wo

Kakushi-keri

(Shidō, dates uncertain.)

There, by the crescent moon, the shark
Has hid his head [beneath the wave].

LATER EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

(152)

Haka-bara ya
Aki no hotaru no
Futatsu mitsu

(Edo-za School)

A cemetery.....

And autumn fireflies two or three.

This was a true "epigram," being an inscription on the picture of a skeleton. Fireflies chiefly haunt dark and lonely places:—hence their mention in the present context.

(153)

Asa-shimo ya
Tsue de e-gakishi
Fuji no yama

(Edo-za School)

The morning hoar-frost, and Mount Fuji
Drawn on it with my walking-stick.

(154)

Hana ga iu
Shibai mite kuru
Hito nikushi

(Josen, died 1715.)

The blossoms say, "We hate the folks
Who come here from the theatre."

A contrast between nature and the Philistinism of artificial amusements. Remember that in Old Japan so strong a taint of vulgarity attached to the drama that no Samurai ever entered a playhouse,—at any rate openly.

(155)

*Mishi yume no**Samete mo iro no**Kakitsubata*

(Shūshiki, 1683-1728)

The dream I dreamt has faded, but

The iris keeps its colours yet.

That is, though I die, the world remains.—The poetess's death song.

(156)

*Aru hodo no**Date shi-tsukushite**Kami-ko kana*

(Sono-Jo, 1665-1726)

Who carried foppery to extremes

Alas ! now wears a paper coat.

The miserable end of empty-headedness and extravagance.

(157)

*Ota ko ni**Kami naburaruru**Atsusa kana*

(Sono-Jo)

Such heat that, when the child I bear

Upon my back plays with my hair,.....

A picture of intense summer heat, which the slightest touch of another makes unendurable.

(158)

*Nui-mono ya**Ki mo sede yogozu**Satsuki-ame*

(Anonymous)

Embroideries not e'en yet worn
Are tarnished by the rains of June.

(159)

Mono-sugo ya
Ara omoshiro no
Kaeri-bana

(Onitsura, 1661-1738)

Uncanny and yet pleasing are
These flow'rs that blossom out of time.

This poet has a great reputation, some going so far as to assert that he unites the excellencies of all the schools. Bashō and he knew and respected each other, and Onitsura arrived independently at very much the same conclusions as Bashō did. As early as 1685, he wrote: "Apart from truth, no poetry. All the rules hitherto obeyed lack reality. Truth must ever be the aim, though if one were to follow truth slavishly, something alien to truth would result.....Though the words may be shallow, the sense must be deep.....Consider not whether a style be antique or modern:—the modern will become old; the old is ever new."—Onitsura was evidently a vigorous thinker and a sane critic. Pity that fate had not given him a wider field to work in. That he really penetrated below the surface of things to the *lacrimæ rerum*, is shown by such epigrams as Nos. 162-164, while No. 160 displays his delicate sense of humour.

(160)

Natsu wa mata
Fuyu ga mashi ja to
Iware-keri

(Onitsura)

And in the summer, folks opined
That winter was to be preferred.

(161)

Nyoppori to
Aki no sora naru
Fuji no yama

(Onitsura)

Without a word of warning, there,
In th' autumn sky, Mount Fuji stands.

(162)

Gaikotsu no
Ue wa yosôte
Hana-mi kana

(Onitsura)

Oh ! flower-gazers, who have decked
The surface of their skeletons !

This was composed on seeing some magnificently dressed ladies
and gentlemen gazing at the blossoms.

(163)

Mata hitotsu
Hana ni tsure-yuku
Inochi kana

(Onitsura)

Together with one blossom more,
Oh ! life, thou goest on thy way.

This was composed on seeing some falling blossoms.

(164)

Saku kara ni
Miru kara ni hana no
Chiru kara ni

(Onitsura)

They blossom forth, and so I gaze,
And so these flowers fade, and so.....

Composed on seeing some luxuriantly blossoming flowers.
The world is a round of perpetual change, and all phenomena are
evanescent.

(165)

Oi no aki
Ake mutsu wo kiku
Omoshiroa

(Ritô, died 1755.)

The old man's autumn, who with joy
Hears the six strokes that tell the dawn.

Old people who, sleeping little, weary for the daylight, rejoice when the stroke of six on the temple bell announces that morning has at length come after the long autumn night. There is an implied comparison of old age to the autumn season.

(166)

Hana no yume
Kikitaki chō ni
Koe mo nashi

(Reikan, dates uncertain.)

It has no voice,—the butterfly,
Whose dream of flow'rs I fain would learn.

Suggested by a butterfly asleep upon a blossom. But the "butterfly's dream of flowers" was already mentioned in ancient times by the mystical Chinese philosopher Chwang Tzu.

(167)

Sendō no
Kenkwa wa sunde
Kawazu kana

(Yūya, dates uncertain.)

And when the boatmen have made up
Their quarrel, oh ! then 'tis the frogs.

Noise succeeding to noise.

(168)

Tomarite mo
Tsubasa wa ugoku
Kochō kana

(Ryūbai, dates uncertain.)

Oh ! little butterfly, with wings
Still moving even when it lights !

(169)

*Chiru made mo**Chiranu keshiki wo**Tsubaki kana*

(Shosei, dates uncertain.)

Oh! the camellia, which ne'er
Appears like dropping till it drops.

An instance of minute observation:—the blossom of the camellia, without withering, is apt to startle one by suddenly falling to the ground. The Japanese sometimes, therefore, compare it to a decapitated head.

(170)

*Hyaku-nari ya**Tsuru hito-suji no**Kokoro yori*

(Chiyo, 1703-1775)

This is a poetical rendering of the Buddhist text 萬法唯一心 lit, "myriad devices simply one heart," which means that one intention will manifest itself in innumerable forms, one misconception will lead to innumerable errors, etc., etc. A text of kindred import, which the poetess perhaps had in mind, is 發心一念三千 to be freely paraphrased as "Religion is one, forms are many." This difficult epigram is here given on account of its celebrity, and also because it is typical of a class. In the impossibility of translating it literally, the following must suffice as an approximation:—

A hundred tendrils, yea! and all

From the same vine that is their heart.

Another reading for *hyaku-nari* is *sen-nari*, the name of a species of climbing gourd or calabash, which is commonly grown on a trellis to support the quantities of pendent fruit.

(171)

*Hiru-gao ya**Dochira no tsuyu mo**Ma ni awazu*

(Yokoi Yayū, 1702-1783)

Alas! the noon convolvulus,
That neither dew may aught avail!

The *asa-gao* (lit. "morning face," called in America the "morning glory," in England "convolvulus") is washed by the morning dew; similarly the *yū-gao* (lit. "evening face") by the dews of eve. But what of the *hiru-gao* ("midday face")? What can it rely on for its refreshment?

(172)

*Yama-dera no**Yo-ake ya kane ni**Chiru karasu*

(Yokoi Yayū)

A temple on a hill, whose bell
At break of day startles the rooks.

(173)

*Bake-mono no**Shōtai mitari**Kare-obana*

(Yokoi Yayū)

I've seen the bogie's veritable
Shape:—it's merely withered grass.

I had taken it for a goblin, and lo! it was nothing but a clump of that *eulalia* grass which grows man-high on the Japanese hill-sides, with fronds that look like beckoning hands.—This epigram, originally aimed at a teacher whose great reputation did not maintain itself on closer acquaintance, has become proverbial for disenchantment.

(174)

*Mijika-yo ya**Ware ni wa nagaki**Yume samenu*

(Yakoi Yayū)

Is life then short? This dream of mine
Seems long enough that now has faded.

The poet's death song.

(175)

Uguisu ya
Kanai sorôte
Meshi-jibun

(Buson, 1716-1783)

The nightingale and—dinner-time,
 With the whole family assembled.

A humorous contrast of the esthetic and the commonplace.

(176)

Kwaikyū
 (Memories of the Past.)
Osoki hi no
Tsumorite tōki
Mukashi kana

(Buson)

Oh ! distant past, made up of slow
 But ever accumulating days !

(177)

Soko-soko ni
Kyō mi-sugoshinu
Tanishi-uri

(Buson)

The snail-man, hurrying along,
 Saw not the city which he traversed.

Others come to gaze at the metropolis. The poor vendor of edible snails hurries along without seeing its wonders, and then trudges home again,—a picture of the hard life of the poor.

(178)

Ika-nobori
Kinō no sora no
Ari-dokoro

(Buson)

The kite flies in the self-same spot
Of sky where yesterday it flew.

Though these lines mean nothing more than that the kite is being flown to-day where it was flown yesterday, they have obtained great praise on the score of combined ingenuity and simplicity.

(179)

Haru-same ya
Mono-gatari-yuku
Mino to kasa

(Buson)

A show'r in spring, where an umbrella
And rain-coat walk along conversing.

A humorous sketch this of two pedestrians, of whom the spectator, viewing them probably from behind, sees nothing but their outer protections against the weather.

(180)

Uzumi-bi ya
Tsui ni wa nieru
Nabe no mono

(Buson)

Ash-smothered coals and, at long last,
The gruel simmering in the pot.

We here see portrayed some recluse sitting up on a winter's night over a brazier, at which with difficulty he cooks his simple meal. The critics admire the prominence given to the word *uzumi-bi*, "ash-smothered coals."

(181)

Uguisu no
Koe tôki hi mo
Kure ni keri

(Buson)

Done is the long spring day, wherein
The nightingale did sing afar.

(182)

Machi-bito no
Ashi-oto tōki
Ochi-ba kana

(Buson)

How distant on the fallen leaves
 His footstep sounds for whom I wait !

(183)

Mizu-tori ya
Kare-ki no naka ni
Kago ni-chō

(Buson)

Some water-fowl, and in the midst
 Of withered trees two palanquins.

Fourteen pages of discussion are devoted in the commentary to this thumb-nail sketch of a desolate scene:—Was there any one in the palanquins? Were they runaway lovers? Were the bearers there, or had *they* run away? Is the scene laid on the border of a marsh? etc., etc.

(184)

Fugu-jiru no
Ware ikite iru
Ne-zame kana

(Buson)

Poison-fish soup last night, yet lo !
 I wake to find myself alive.

The *fugu* is a delicious, yet often highly poisonous, fish of the genus *Tetrodon*, whence a proverbial saying to which this epigram makes allusion: *Fugu wa kuitashi, inochi wa oshishi*, "I want to eat poison-fish, yet I grudge my life."

(185)

Hana ni yōte
Kaerusa nikushi
Shira-byōshi

(Buson)

The flow'rs have made me drunk :—I loathe
The singing-girls on my way home.

The idea is closely similar to that of No. 154 :—natural beauty disgusts one with meretricious charms (and in this case the word “meretricious” may be taken in its literal sense).

(186)

Hana ni kite

Hana ni inemuru

Itoma kana

(Buson)

Coming to see the flow'rs, I sleep
Beneath the flowers, being free.

The commentators praise the delicate esthetic feeling here displayed by the poet, who, instead of vulgarly profiting by every moment of time to gaze at the blossoms, contrariwise rested and wasted some of it, as he had the leisure; for thus may beauty penetrate more deeply into the soul.

(187)

Ara muzukashi no kana-zukai ya na ! Figi ni gai
arazumba, aa mama yo !

Ume sakinu

Dore ga mume yara

Ume ja yara

(Buson)

“Oh ! what a hard thing is orthography ! If there be no injury to the sense, let us spell as we like !”—After these introductory words in prose, the poem goes on to say literally : “The plum-tree is in blossom. Which [blossoms] are *mume*, and which *ume* ?” (Different ways of spelling the Japanese word signifying “plum-blossom.”) We are reminded of the saying, “The rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” Japanese spelling, after centuries of neglect, was beginning to be discussed and correctness insisted on in Buson's time, which, curiously enough, synchronised with the period when Dr. Johnson fixed our own English orthography.

(188)

*Samidare ya**Aru yo hisoka ni**Matsu no tsuki*

(Ryōta, 1719-1787)

In the June rains, as if by stealth,
One night the moon shines through the pines.

Ryōta, the third head of the Setsumon School and author of no less than sixty works, was one of the most famous of the eighteenth century revivalists. The epigram here quoted has the honour of being the only one that ever attracted Chinese notice, and was paraphrased into that language. The paraphrase is as follows:—

長夏草堂寂 連霄聽雨眠 何時縣明月 松影落庭前
i.e. literally, "'Tis midsummer, and my grass hut is dreary; every evening I fall asleep to the sound of rain. Suddenly the moon hangs [in the sky]; and the shadow of the pine-tree falls on my garden."

(189)

*Meigetsu ya**Umare-kawaraba**Mine no matsu*

(Ryōta)

Oh! moon, if born again, I'd be
A pine-tree on a mountain peak.

In order to be the first to behold the moon rise. Remember that, to the Japanese, the moon is the loveliest of all natural objects, solitary and incomparable. No sunset, no rainbow, no stars of heaven share her praise here, as they do in Western lands.

(190)

*Roku-gwatsu ya**Itaru tokoro mina**Yu no nagare*

(Rankō, 1728-1799)

'Tis July, and on every side
Nothing but rivers of hot water.

This was composed at the sulphur baths of Kusatsu, the strongest and among the hottest in the world. See Murray's "Japan Handbook" for a description of the curious method of bathing under a quasi-military discipline which is there pursued.

(191)

Aka-aka to
Shimo kōri-keri
Soba no kuki

(Rankō)

To ice all crimson red has frozen
 The rime upon the buckwheat stems.

This is one of the numerous class of epigrams testifying to observation of minute facts in nature:—the thin crimson stems of the buckwheat may be seen cased in ice on some day or other almost every winter, at least in the uplands.

(192)

Kare-ashi no
Hi ni hi ni orete
Nagare-keri

(Rankō)

The withered reeds, that day by day
 Break off, are floated down the stream.

(193)

Mutsu Dono no
Suzumi-dai nari
Chi-Matsushima

(Gyōtai, 1731-1791)

On Matsushima's thousand isles
 The Lord of Mutsu takes the cool.

Mutsu is the name of the province off whose coast lies the little pine-clad archipelago of Matsushima, famous for its beauty.

(194)

Ama tsutau
Hoshi no hikari ya
Naku chidori

(Gyōtai)

Where shine the stars that wend along
 The heav'ns, there doth the sea-gull cry.

This is to be interpreted allegorically. The poet—a mere wandering Samurai—had been summoned to the Court of Kyōto. Accordingly he likens himself to a sea-gull,—a common, worthless bird,—and his new surroundings to the glorious starry vault.

(195)

Uguisu wo
Modosu-na ume ni
Kakine shite

(Shirō, 1736-1812)

Around the plum-flow'rs make a fence,
 To stay the nightingale's return.

A nightingale had actually come and perched upon a plum-tree in the poet's garden. He would fain resort to violence to prevent its flying home.

(196)

Inazuma ya
Etsujin to ni-jī
Kaku ma naki

(Etsujin, 1760-1836.)

A flash of lightning, and no time
 To write the one word "Etsujin."

The point of this epigram lies in the extreme simplicity of the characters with which the name "Etsujin" is written, namely 目人 which any one could dash off in an instant of time.—This poet is to be distinguished from his namesake (one of the "Ten Wits," see pp. 196 and 237), whose name is written 越人.

(197)

*Ware to kite**Asobe ya oya no**Nai suzume*

(Issa, 1763-1827)

You little sparrows left without
A mother, come and play with me.

This is said to have been composed by Issa at the age of five, when he had just lost his own mother.

(198)

*Nan no sono**Hyaku-man-goku mo**Sasa no tsuyu*

(Issa)

What then? what are his million bales?
Mere dewdrops on the bamboo grass.

The circumstances under which this verse was composed may serve to illustrate the oddity and independence of spirit which characterised, not this poet only, but many of his brother epigrammatists. The Lord of Kaga, richest of all the Daimyōs, whose revenue was assessed at a million bales of rice, summoned Issa to his presence one day; but the latter refused to go. Thereupon, the Daimyō despatched his henchman with a gold-lacquered box containing His Highness's album, to request the favour of Issa's autograph. This, likewise, Issa at first refused; but being at length over-persuaded, he took his own cheap broken ink-slab, moistened the Indian ink-stick with his saliva, and penned a line of poetry as required. "If you don't like it, you can tear it up," said he, on being remonstrated with for his rudeness. The Daimyō, by no means displeased, sent him ten gold coins in acknowledgment; but Issa could only with difficulty be persuaded to keep three shillings, the amount of his rent. Later on, the Daimyō presented him with a beautiful sandal-wood ink-box; but Issa was so much wearied by the visitors who flocked to gaze at it that he handed it over gratis to a curio-dealer, who took it to Yedo and sold it for several hundred dollars. Issa, himself absolutely indifferent to money, composed the above epigram as a vent to his feelings on the

occasion. While his philosophy was strictly practical, his compassion for all living creatures was so profound that he demurred even to killing a flea. His style, though it could rise into the classical on an occasion, was for the most part colloquial, as in No. 200.

(199)

*Yase-kawazu**Makeru-na Issa**Kore ni ari*

(Issa)

Emaciated frog ! be not
Worsted in fight :—Issa is here.

(200)

*Yare ! naku-na**Sore hodo buji de**Kaeru kari*

(Issa)

Hallo ! you shouldn't cry, you storks,
Returning home so safe and sound !

(201)

*Kaerusa no**Yū-hi-zakura ya**Mune ni tsue*

(Sō-a, dates uncertain.)

A typical example of the class of Japanese epigrams most difficult to translate. The words are literally, "Home-going's evening sun cherry-trees, and staff to chest." The picture is that of some aged man, who, having spent the day among the cherry-blossoms, is now returning home, but, rapt by the beauty of the sunset glow upon the flowers, remains gazing at it, his body bent and leaning on his staff. Something like the following may serve as an approximate rendering:—

Cherry-flow'rs sunset-lit :—I turn
And gaze, my breast upon my staff.

(202)

Sei daseba
Kōru ma mo nashi
Mizu-guruma

(Keirin, dates uncertain.)

If but the wheel be diligent,
 The water has no time to freeze.

This verse has become proverbial for industry.

(203)

Uguisu ya
Hana naki ki ni wa
Oranu hazu

(Gomei, dates uncertain.)

Of course the nightingale stays not
 Upon a tree bereft of flowers.

The elderly poet composed this epigram on calling to see his mistress and finding her abroad. A pretty young woman could not be expected, he suggests, to care for a withered gallant like himself.

(204)

Koi-shinaba
Waga tsuka de nake
Hototogisu

Cuckoo ! if I should die of love,
 Oh ! [come and] sing upon my tomb !

Composed by a courtesan in the Yoshiwara at Yedo, who, having been slandered to her lover, was abandoned by him and reduced to despair.

(205)

Kuchi akeba
Go-zō no miyuru
Kawazu kana

(Anon.)

Behold the frog, who, when he opes
His mouth, displays his whole inside !

Proverbial in the sense of "Do not blurt out all your secret thoughts."—The term *go-zō*, here rendered the "whole inside," is literally the "five viscera."

THE END.

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